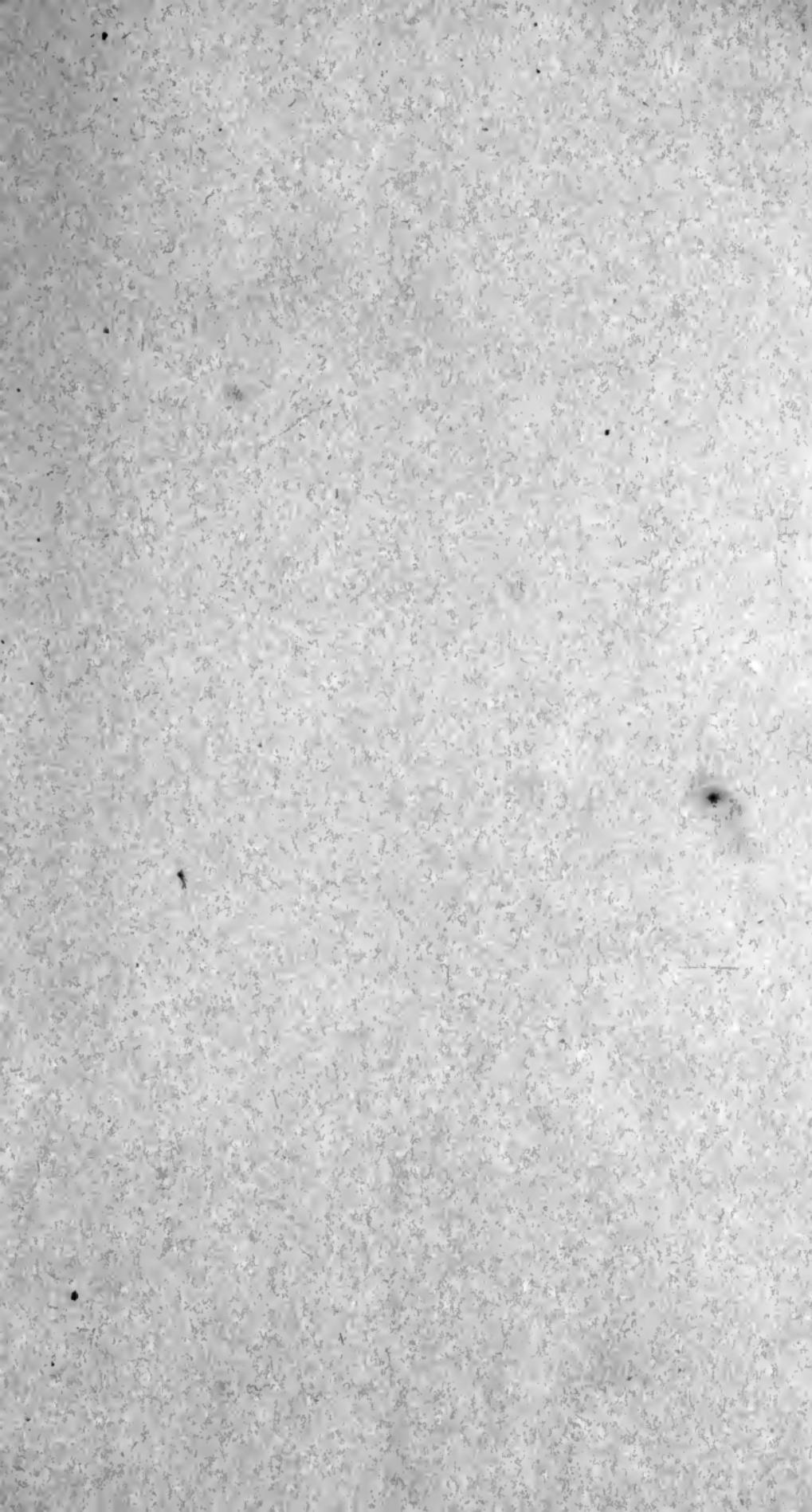


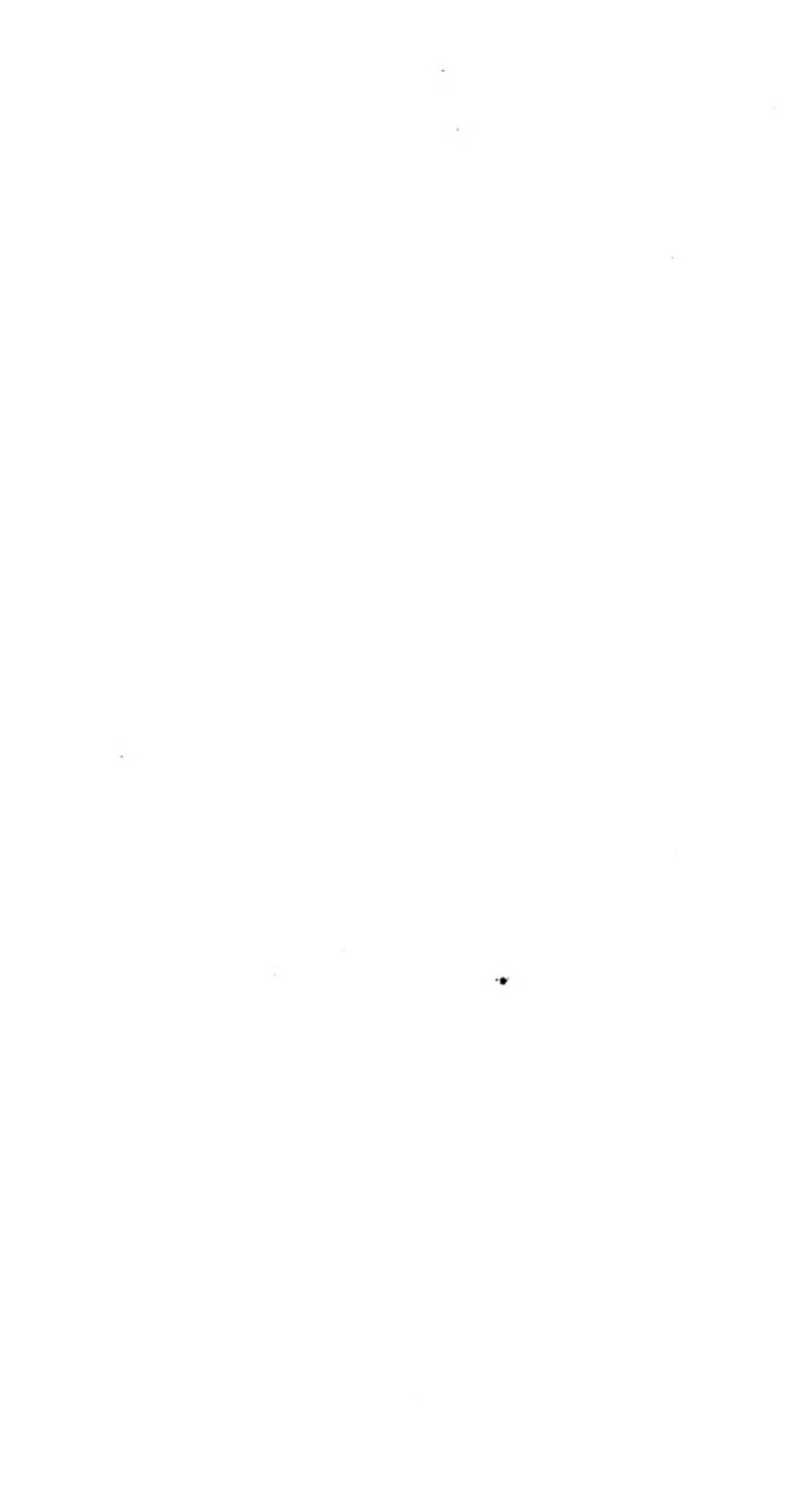


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MELTON DE MOWBRAY:

OR,

THE BANKER'S SON.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MELTON DE MOWBRAY;

OR, THE BANKER'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNT, THE FALL, AND DECLARATION.

"A cry more tunable
Was never hallooed to, nor cheered with horn."

SHAKESPEARE.

HAPPINESS, like life, must pass away,—a truth of which youth is rarely prone to think; but perish it must, for immortality, in any form, is not for this ever-changing world.

To the philosopher, whose protracted years have brought experience, whose contemplation has been turned to this fiat of universal de-

struction, it becomes a question, whether the sudden death of happiness may not be a lighter blow than to see it dwindle, linger, and outlive itself. It is not merely in animal and vegetable life that reproduction from decay is in perpetual progress. The same occurs in the sources of happiness which spring to-morrow from beneath the ruin of our happiness to-day ; but this is a truth which our hearts are apt to combat, and slow to acknowledge. In the one case, the change is so obvious and constant, that the dullest must remark it. The smoke-dried mechanic sees the refuse of his city-markets sold to insure a future crop ; the ploughboy spreads the trodden straw to nourish the seed which has the germ of life within it ; our bodies are consigned to earth, and the rank grass which springs above the grave, hints to the heedless of the transmigration of our earthly portion ; the parson's sheep destroy the grass ; the honoured guests dine with the parson, and destroy his mutton and — : but we do not wish to prove how innocently men may be cannibals, we are merely anxious to point out that the change from life to de-

cay, from decay to life, is too palpable to escape our notice.

In the changes of happiness, however, our memory turns to dwell upon the past ; it loves to linger with the ruins which time has seared, and, even while we spread our sails anew, and dance upon the joyous billows in the bark built from the wreck we have sustained, we are loath to confess that good can spring from evil, happiness from suffering. What mother, who has felt the agony of losing her first-born in its infancy, is ready to allow the sacred joy with which she recalls the early promise of the opening bud ; or how, while she clothes the departed cherub with the bright perfections of a dream, is she the happier for the lesson given to affections warped by blind excess—the happier for having lost her babe in the beauty of innocence, than if she had seen the spoiled child become the heartless man, and felt the sting of the serpent she had unwisely nurtured in her doting bosom ?

And what, asks the impatient reader, has this to do with the hero of our tale ? Less, indeed, than if his destiny had blessed him

with the hand of Lady Helen Fawndove, instead of ordaining those trials which were brooding overhead ; but the observations may not have been made in vain, if the reader will apply them in the future career of Melton de Mowbray.

To be honest, however, while one chapter began by noticing that buoyant spirit of youth which hastens to the goal of happiness it deems immortal, we were striving to account within ourselves for the motives which influenced Lady Helen and Melton de Mowbray.

How deeply, how fondly, they loved, had been confessed by more than the language of their eyes ; and yet, instead of hurrying forward to the temple of Love, they were content to linger by the way—to sip the sweets and twine the flowers of their rosy path. It might have been that, young as they were, their deeper turn of thought had ruminated on the misery which mingles within the lot of man ; that a something in the spirit of prophecy had whispered doubts of the future : they spoke not of the happiness they felt, lest misery should hear the boast and turn to destroy the

charm. Like the Frenchman who, escaping the infirmities of age, dreaded the mention of death, lest the king of terrors should be reminded of the prey he had forgotten ; so, in silence, they drank of the cup of bliss, and, while in their hearts they pondered on that misery which none can escape, they spoke not their rising fears, but said within themselves, “ Hush ! and we still may be forgotten.”

Independently of this more wild and visionary theory, there was another motive which influenced the lovers in keeping all their happiness to themselves ; a motive, we confess, more nearly allied to the infirmities of human nature than to the dark vision of superstitious fears.

The time had passed when the glaring manœuvres of Lady Blankisle could raise the scornful indignation of Mowbray, or inflict a painful humiliation on her daughter. Lady Helen’s smiles were no longer confounded with the mother’s ; if Mowbray felt that he owed the affliction of the latter to his wealth, he also felt that the blessing of the former was given to himself alone : while Lady Helen, on

her part, felt she was wholly and honourably acquitted of plotting with the manœuvrer.

This assurance once established, they could even find amusement in Lady Blankisle's little polished way of throwing them together; but, ungrateful as they were, they took a quiet, malicious pleasure, in blinding the anxious mother to the truth; and what added to their weight of sin, they accepted all her kind intentions, and yet, with that mysterious fulness of expression so remarkable in both, they gave the labourer no promise of return for the toils of mind and body.

Such was the happy position on the one part, and the anxious expectation on the other, when matters were brought to a crisis by a trifling, but unlooked-for, accident.

The month of November, wretched as it sounds when associated with the fogs of London, may still be a joyous month in a purer atmosphere: such was the case at the period in which we write, and as, on the morrow, Mr. Noble's fox hounds were to draw the marquess's covers, the guests of Blankisle Hall decided upon going to see them throw off.

The evening of the preceding day was largely devoted to the arrangements for the morrow ; carriages and saddle-horses were to be put in requisition, and, as Lady Helen's favourite horse had fallen lame, it was arranged that she should ride Mowbray's beautiful Arabian. To allay the purely maternal anxieties of Lady Blankisle, Mowbray himself consented to forego the pleasure of the chase, in order to ride by Lady Helen's side and see that his Arab behaved well. Nothing more, of course, was intended on the part of the marchioness, or thought of on the part of him who owned the horse. This difficulty being overcome, and the sportsman's penance smoothed by a compliment on the self-denial which "so few men would have practised," all parties retired to rest, and prayed for a fine day on the morrow.

Their wishes were fulfilled for once ; the sun rose with much of that gorgeous splendour which, at this season of the year, is wont to herald and succeed its setting path ; there was a frosty freshness in the air, but the ground was soft without being heavy ; the spider's

web was thrown upon the furze and bent beneath the diamonds of the sparkling dew : for horses, dogs, and men, never was there promise of a finer hunting-day.

Soon after breakfast, a string of carriages filed towards the hall-door ; some were closed for the use of the dowagers, who naturally dreaded an autumnal breeze, and were content to see less than younger eyes ; others were thrown open for those who could brave and enjoy the invigorating air, and, naturally, wished to see and be seen as much as possible. One by one, each various equipage was started with its precious freight, armed *cap-à-pied* with muffs, tippets, cloaks, shawls, and comforters ; next came the livelier group of grooms and saddle-horses, each apparently animated by the thoughts of the scene they were about to witness ; girths were tightened, saddles adjusted, bridles glanced at, a ruffled hair laid smooth, all with quickness and precision, as if it were a case of life or death. As to the noble animals, it was beautiful to see the fire of the watchful eye, the restless ears catching at every sound, the body trembling with

anxiety, and the foot pawing with impatience the sluggish earth it spurned ; still more lovely was the sight to behold this fiery courage curbed by the gentleness of woman, and yielding obedience to her magic touch.

The equestrians soon overtook the train of carriages, and, branching across the superb downs which abound in the county of Dorset, they proceeded slowly towards the appointed cover. As they ascended one of those rounded hills which indicate a chalk country, and rise and fall like the ocean of a heaving world, they perceived carriages and horsemen approaching from various quarters to the point which commanded the surrounding country.

An artist could not have selected a better position for painting a panorama, than the centre to which the lords and ladies of the land were flocking ; indeed, so well was this known, that, whenever the Blankisle covers were drawn, it was the signal for a general rendezvous. A country ball was nothing to it ; for when does a lovely woman look so lovely as when mounted on the noblest animal in creation ; her eyes, lips, and cheeks beaming

with life, and freshened by the air of Heaven ; her symmetry half shewn and half concealed by the flowing habit ; her sunny locks playing with the wanton breeze, and struggling to escape from hat or cap, which mingles archness with intelligence ; the snow-white collar, falling like the petals of the lily, and shamed by the fairer neck which rises from within—when, we ask, does woman look more lovely ? Can the lace and jewels of a ball-dress vie with this ? Can the atmosphere of midnight revelry meet with the breath of morn ? Can the waltz, graceful, joyous, maddening though it be, hold comparison with the springy swiftness of the glorious horse ?—if there be one who thinks it can, let him wait “ till morning breaks,” and watch the jaded looks of the divinity he has worshipped by night, and, on the morrow, let him mark the return of her who has ridden “ o'er the hills and far away,” and known the only excitement which leaves no lassitude behind.

But, hark to the huntsman’s horn in the distance !—how every voice is hushed, and eyes are turned, as if to meet the sound ; see

how the horses' ears, endowed with the nicer instinct of the brute, point, like the vane, to the quarter whence it comes. Yonder is the huntsman, light, spare, and weather-beaten, as if service had washed out the scarlet newness of his coat and complexion too—there he is, like a prime minister, leading his pack, and, like him, with all the cares of the country written in his face, though he rides the great horse ; but, when was mortal minister so well supported?—there is not a hound amongst the many that would run false. No taint, no mange, no ratting, no challenging without a cause ; with consciences as clear as their unblemished skin, and music in their voice of truth. Next come his whippers-in, compared with whom, the whippers-in of St. Stephen's chapel are but as sextons compared to a bishop. Young, active, and resolute dogs, who would stop at nothing—there was young Dashwood, who leaped a park wall and lighted in a pond.

“Get off, and swim for it,” said Squire Noble, who saw his man's horse sticking, floundering in the mud, and thought the fellow must be drowned.

“ Thank your honour, I never *unlights*,” replied the youth, as cool as a boy on a rocking-horse.

And there he stuck, till the horse made a desperate effort, and brought himself and his rider to shore. On his right was his cousin, Jack Fish, who stuck to his saddle as his relative did to his horse. It was told of him, and we believe the fact, that intending to leap the winding of a river, his horse came to such a dead halt on the bank that the girths were broken by the shock, and, while the horse remained behind, Jack arrived safe on the opposite bank, with the saddle between his legs: from that day he was only known as “ the flying fish.” But we must not tarry for details; enough to say, that Mr. Noble did the thing in the very best style—had a stud of from eighty to a hundred horses for himself and suite; two packs of the fleetest fox hounds in England, lodged in kennels as sweet as a drawing-room, and, from the master to the deputy dog-cook, the whole appointment was perfect.

To look at the staid features of the head

huntsman, or, to continue the title, of the country's prime-minister, the solemn obedience of his pack and Jacks-in-office, who would have dreamed of the slapping pace at which they could go, when once they opened and set to work? The Reform Bill, with schedules A to Z, was sluggish in comparison. They stopped at nothing; though, in their case, the country, instead of going with them, was left behind, ay, and crossed into the bargain.

The cover about to be drawn was a wide belt of young plantations, on the verge of the Blankisle property. On either side were immense fields, of thirty or fifty acres each; but the line of plantations, winding at the foot of the hill we have mentioned, might be distinctly seen through its whole extent. For the protection of the young trees, or rather of the young foxes—for to the foxhunter in heart all earthly considerations are expected to bow—the furze had been suffered to grow, and rabbits to multiply; here and there were patches of long grass, reeds, rushes, and alders, marking the spot where the crystal

springs burst, in the winter months, from the mountains of snowy chalk. They were sure to find ; the knowing ones knew, nay, and artless virgins imagined, if they were a fox, there they would dwell.

“ Is it not a glorious sight ? ” said Mowbray to Lady Helen Fawndove, as he nestled close to her side, and soothed the impatience of his docile Arabian.

“ It is, indeed ! ” replied Lady Helen, her eyes and features lit with animation. “ I almost wish I were a man.”

“ I am glad, dear Helen, that you qualify the wish.”

“ I do, I do, for your sake,” said Lady Helen, a slight blush recalling the rose which had fled in the excitement of the moment ; “ but that woman must have the heart of stone who could not enter into the spirit of the scene.”

“ Or feel with the feelings of a man,” said Mowbray, with one of his playful tones of satire.

“ Nay, now that is too severe ; merely because I felt with you, and for you, and

thought how very selfish it was to keep you at my side."

" I wish no greater happiness, and that dearest Helen knows ; may the day never come when our feelings shall cease to accord !"

A prayer to which Lady Helen's eyes answered a fervent " amen."

" But look, Melton," she said, glancing round the field, " how the very mother, with her babe, has left the cottage fire ! See how the children have ceased their play ! the husbandmen their labour ! There must be an innate voice which answers to the huntsman's call. How gay and stirring is the scattered scarlet, and the neighing of the horses ! I could almost fancy we were looking on a field of battle."

" Without the chance of fighting."

" I hope so, indeed !" said Lady Helen, with a smile ; " my masculine wishes would, I suspect, fail me then."

" The hounds are in cover," cried Mowbray, " and in goes the huntsman."

" With the bounding lightness of my little

pet greyhound," added Lady Helen, struck with the graceful ease of horse and rider.

They both continued to watch in silent expectation. Though the heights on which they stood enabled them to look down on the plantations, yet the furze, grass, and brushwood, were too high to give much view of the hounds. Here and there, a few tails appeared above the surface, and, like the pipe of a diving-bell, gave notice of a busy body below. Now and then, too, a head popped up, and the hound leaped some matted and impenetrable bush ; nevertheless, independently of these passing signs, their progress was sufficiently marked by the startled rabbits, which, darting through the hedge, scurried along, and shewed their white scuts as they bolted into their earths. Then, again, the timid hare took to the fields ; and, in more than one instance, was so intent upon the alarm from which it fled, as to approach the spectators on the hill without heeding man, the most destructive of animals. One passed within a few feet of Lady Helen, whose gentler nature sympathised with its fears.

"Poor pussy!" she thought, "how little do you guess that you owe your safety to the danger you fly from! that a higher stake than yourself has absorbed all other thoughts!"

While thus she mused, and watched poor pussy, who had taken courage to pause and listen, her attention was suddenly awakened by the exclamation of her less sympathetic companion.

"Devilish odd!" cried Mowbray, using an exclamation scarcely suited to the ear of one whose brilliant eyes and graceful form recalled the image of a young and startled gazelle.

"What! tell me!" was, nevertheless, the quick inquiry of the gentle Lady Helen, whose anxiety left no time to be fastidious.

"I could have sworn there was a fox in yonder bottom."

"You're right, Melton. Hark to the hounds! there—I saw it!"

"Where? where?"

"By yonder workmen; I saw it distinctly."

"Confound those clodhopping louts! hang-

ing about the cover like poachers. They've headed the fox, and —”

“ Sha'n't we see it again? Say yes, dear Melton; say yes.”

“ Yes, yes, my own sweet Helen!” answered Mowbray, whose hunting ecstasy was exceeded by that of hearing “ dear Melton” for the first time.

“ And yonder it is!” cried Lady Helen, glad to escape the impassioned smile which accompanied Mowbray's look of delight, and pointing to a fine fox which now broke cover.

The same countrymen who had once headed the fox, now raised a loud halloo, and a hundred eyes were fixed upon the runaway. Off he went with boldness in his flight; he knew his country, and took to it as if he knew his strength and cunning. No pottering and hanging about the cover from which he had been so unceremoniously disturbed; but, sniffing the air, to try which way the wind blew, he chose its course, and beat its speed. This was the signal for a general move; the old hands, with their purpled scarlets and spot-

less buckskins, gathered up to the side of the cover ; the younger bade a hasty “ Good bye ” to the fair within and without the carriages, by which they had been standing in the glory of bright scarlet and pearl whites, which were just treading on the heels of the old-fashioned buckskins. In a short time the hounds burst from the cover ; the whippers-in had done their duty ; the scent lay like a warm blanket ; and the joyous, deep, and thrilling music of a pack in full cry, swept through the valleys, and echoed to the hills.

“ Don’t you long to be with them ? ” asked Mowbray, without taking his eyes from the field.

“ Rather, don’t you ? ”

“ No, no, dearest Helen ; or it was but an instant. But look at the gray which leads.”

“ And holds the place, Melton, you long to fill.”

“ No, no, love ; but for the moment when that fellow turned from the gate and looked for a gap. The rider is afraid ; for I know the horse would have faced a cathedral. Who

the devil can it be? Well, well, he won't lead long. Thank fortune, there 's no gap, and they can't lift the hinges."

"Who 's that on the chestnut?" asked Lady Helen.

"Lord Betting; and over he goes like a stag. Bravo, my lord! I forgive you for that. Beautiful! again and again. Next is O'Donnell. How I wish the gate were a wall, and you would see his Irish mare touch the top like a greyhound! Come, dearest Helen; I know every inch of the country, and we can see more of the sport from yonder hills;" and off they cantered.

Indeed, it seemed as if the very carriages had heard the hounds, and grown frisky with the sound. They were all in motion, though nothing was heard but the creaking of the springs and leather as they passed along the downy turf. The spectators, with one accord, threw aside their passive intentions, and seemed anxious to gain another view.

Lady Helen Fawndove and Mowbray, who had set the example, soon left their companions behind, as if they were determined

to keep the lead they had taken. Point after point was gained, till, at length, the flatter country which reynard had taken defied the chance of even a distant view.

“ It is all over, dearest; we are thrown out for to-day,” said Mowbray, as he looked at the last of a diminished field.

“ I hope mamma will not be alarmed,” said Lady Helen, thinking, for the first time, of the wild flight she had taken.

“ I hope not,” answered Mowbray, adding with a playful smile, “ Don’t you think she would trust me ? ”

She only answered with a smile somewhat archer than his own, and, turning their horses’ heads towards home, they cantered one while, walked and talked another,—now lingered by the way to gaze on earth or heaven, and revel on the charms which love can fling on every theme it touches.

“ Do you know the country?—indeed, I fear mamma will be anxious,” said Lady Helen as the sweeping downs arose before her.

“ Fear not, sweetest; from yonder hill we shall see the river which flows through your

grounds, and, if we skirt its course, we shall soon be home."

Once more Lady Helen urged the beautiful Arab she rode, and soon came in sight of the river, which, in the distance, wound through a valley of water-meadows, and glittered like a silver streamer. The course they were now to pursue was immediately above the river, which here became straight and rapid; the chalk-hill had lost its usual character, and declined abruptly to the water's edge, as if its shelving base had been carried away by the flood as it retreated by the vallies from the face of the earth.

Lady Helen was a perfect and intrepid horsewoman, and, when Mowbray pointed to the sheep paths, one of which was to form their shorter way, and asked if she dared to follow, her playful answer was—"where a De Mowbray leads the dead would follow;" words said to have been spoken on the field of Agincourt, when his gallant ancestor, about to charge the victorious English, challenged a surviving few to follow and die.

Indeed, Mowbray had galloped along these

tracks a hundred times in safety, and never questioned the chalk, which, under water or turf, will endure like a rock.

It chanced that, owing to a short but severe frost after the fall of heavy rains, the damp chalk had been shivered and loosened.

After proceeding some way, and pausing from time to time to admire the crystal clearness of the stream immediately beneath their eyes, Lady Helen once more suggested the wisdom of a quicker pace. They had scarcely proceeded a hundred yards in a hand canter, when Mowbray felt the earth sink beneath the weight of his horse, which sprang like an arrow in the path from the treacherous ground ; the effect was so sudden, that, ere he could rein his horse, and warn Lady Helen of the danger, he heard a faint scream, then the crumbling chalk, and, on turning round his head, saw his Arab rolling over and over to the bed of the river, and Lady Helen Fawndove sitting on the broken path.

To leap from his horse, kneel by her side, clasp her to his bosom, was the action of a moment.

" Sweetest, dearest — my own beloved Helen ! say that you are safe—that you are not hurt," exclaimed Mowbray, as he gazed upon her pallid cheeks.

Lady Helen, for the moment, could only smile, return the pressure of his hand, and lean her head upon his shoulder ; and when, after a few seconds, she was able to speak and assure him that she was only alarmed, he said nothing, but pointing to the heavens above, their full and swelling hearts united in a silent prayer of gratitude.

When this first duty had been paid, they looked to the poor brute who had been so suddenly rolled into a cold bath ; and, as their eyes glanced at the relative position held by themselves and the two horses, it was impossible to refrain from laughter. To begin with the lower point of the triangle they formed : the gentle Arab having gained a ducking and regained her feet, found little difficulty in getting to land, as the river was shallow with a bottom firm as a gravel walk ; once on shore, she gave herself a shake, like a water-dog, looked for her companions, neighed, then

grabbed a mouthful of tempting grass, and then, pausing in the process of eating, she once more looked upwards, as much as to say, “Here I am, master, but how am I to get back again?”

Mowbray’s hack, about fifty yards in advance of himself, having answered the Arab’s call, betook himself to crop the sweet turf of the steep bank, and, without the trouble of stooping, fed from a manger *au naturel*. To finish with the third point: there sat Lady Helen Fawndove, and there knelt Melton de Mowbray, joyously drinking in the tones of her voice, as, with her quiet humour, she described how it was impossible to keep the saddle when the horse slipped away, and subtracted her seat with the skill of a pickpocket. “And, though I’ve been left like a feather, how shall I take wing, dear Melton?” asked Lady Helen, as she felt that the slightest movement threatened to launch her to the river with the loosened fragments on which she sat.

To put the lady on her legs required the union of strength, caution, and contrivance;

it was, however, effected in safety by Mowbray's gaining a firm rest for his feet—a hold for one hand, while the other was extended to raise the fallen.

"Thank God that it is no worse!" he cried with fervour, as, having reached the unbroken path, he once more pressed Lady Helen to his side, and gained her consent that, on the morrow, he might ask to claim her as his own from the hands of her parents.

"A thousand, thousand thanks!" he exclaimed, when the first meeting of their lips breathed from the heart all that remained unsaid. How true it is, that we know not the value of those we love till danger threatens to snatch them from us!

Moments like these can never perish—they are like the brilliant gathered from the bed of earthly dross; they live apart, treasured, unsullied, and immortal, while baser things die and are forgotten. They are years in existence—by the intensity of feeling, thought, and memory; they are—life,—but, alas! by the figures of the dial, how fleet and transitory!

The cares of this world soon closed upon

our lovers, and interrupted their moments of exquisite rapture. The necessity of returning home—of catching the horses, and, if possible, remounting, were questions which succeeded the oblivion of all but the perfect harmony of love.

“ How shall we get home ? ” asked Lady Helen, as she looked at the Arab beneath her feet, and the other horse grazing in a track too narrow to allow of turning.

“ Never fear, dearest, my Arab will follow like a dog, and all my pets are too well broken to run away. My horse shall walk as our advance-guard, and, where he treads in safety, we may follow.”

Having established this line of march, they approached the animal from which Mowbray had dismounted, and urged it to proceed. The order was obeyed, though somewhat reluctantly, and, with a sagacious caution which seemed to have been suggested by the *écroulement* of its comrade. The Arab, intent on their movements, and obedient to his master’s voice, followed by the edge of the river, and only

stopped from time to time to crop some mouthfuls irresistibly inviting.

Having proceeded somewhat less than a quarter of a mile, they came to a dip, in its earthly sense, and not the river; or, to be more comprehensible, to a shelving hollow, caused, probably, by some huge landslip of former days. This enabled Mowbray to descend to the Arab, and encourage it to mount, while “fair Helen” played the page and held the bridle of the other horse. Mowbray soon returned; and, leading the two horses by one hand, while he aided Lady Helen to ascend the ravine with the other, they soon gained the summit of the downs.

Having thus left the shorter, but somewhat more perilous road, Mowbray looked with anxiety to the damage which had been done in the revolutions performed by the falling Arab. The pommel had been flattened to the saddle, and one girth was broken; the latter was quickly supplied from his own horse, and the pommel, though broken, was so strongly attached to the skin—to use a surgical phrase

— that if he could not make a new one, as surgeons do a nose, he hoped to make it serviceable for the day. In a few minutes all was pronounced to be in readiness.

“ I crave one minute for the lady’s toilet,” said Lady Helen, with a smile, as she resigned Mowbray’s bridle to his hand, and shook back the black silken locks which had escaped, and now fell in wild ringlets on her shoulders.

“ How provoking !” she cried, having been foiled in three successive attempts ; “ what shall I do with this rebellious lock ?”

“ Do !” replied Mowbray, who had watched the toilet in silent admiration ; “ let it die the rebel’s death, and its body be severed from its head.”

“ And would you be so cruel as to lift your hand and give the blow ?”

“ Yes, gladly, sweetest ! and the traitor should be hung and quartered here for evermore !” said Mowbray, pointing to his heart ; “ would that I had the sharpened steel to execute my wishes ! is dear Helen quite unarmed ?” he added with an imploring look.

Luckily for our hero, he lived in the days

of pockets ; and Lady Helen produced a small green velvet case embroidered in gold, which Mowbray recognised as a trifle he had long since presented. In an instant, he seized the weapon he had prayed for ; in another, the rebel ringlet was pressed to his lips, and thence transferred to its promised quarters.

“ The ungrateful make no return ! ” said Lady Helen, as she received back the scissors, and blushed at the reproach she had uttered.

Gladly, gratefully, was it done away. Mowbray proved how readily he had interpreted the meaning of her words ; and, as he presented a lock of his own hair, “ Thus,” he said, “ my own beloved, we pledge our faith ; may death alone divide it ! ”

Lady Helen was too much overcome to reply ; and the contract of devoted love, which had been engraved by the meeting of their lips, was finally sealed by the selfsame instrument.

As soon, however, as she was able to apply her lips to the profaner purposes of words, “ Promise me,” she said, “ this one request ; that, come what may, no hand but thine shall

restore the gift it has received—no voice but thine reclaim the gift you have bestowed.”

“ What would I not promise, solemnly promise, that my beloved Helen could ask ! But, wherefore ask it ? Does my gentle, beautiful gazelle, tremble at the sight of home ! What need she fear ? Tell me, I beseech you, dearest ! ” said Mowbray, anxious he knew not why, but catching some vague and undefined alarm.

“ Indeed ! indeed ! I do not fear ; I hope, I believe, we are beyond the power of harm : but, gentle as you deem me, I can be firm. I would not that you should think your Helen could change or waver ! This would be utter wretchedness ! Believe it as impossible, as I believe you never, never would wish me otherwise than now. My mother is capricious—we have not her consent.”

“ And is that your only fear ? ” said Mowbray, brightening up, and adding, with his own peculiar humour, “ has she not smiled upon us, and said in her heart, ‘ My children ? ’ ”

“ For shame, Melton ! you are an odiously

satirical creature ; and the world will never love you."

"The world does love me ; and thus I clasp it in my arms !" cried Mowbray ; and, while he thus punished the fair libeller, he whispered what he felt, "that Helen was the world to him."

"Worlds were not made to stand still," said Lady Helen, as soon as the punishment was over ; "indeed, I fear mamma will be anxious ; pray help me to my saddle."

Mowbray instantly obeyed ; and, joining his hands as a stepping-stone for her fairy foot, she was about to spring to her seat, when, pointing to the pommel, he said—

"Stop! stop! dear Helen ! we must be gentle with the fractured limb. Let me see if my pet has forgotten her former lessons."

And, going to the head of his Arabian, he held it lightly by the bridle, and touched the pasterns gently with his whip. The docile animal answered its master's wishes ; and, with the gentleness of a lamb, folded its legs,

and suffered Lady Helen to arrange her seat without an effort."

"Rise, Tedmora!" she cried, petting and caressing its neck. The next moment Mowbray had vaulted into his saddle.

We spare the reader the happiness of a lover's *tête-à-tête*. Mowbray and Lady Helen reached Blankisle Hall in safety. Just before they came in sight of the house, Mowbray raised Lady Helen's hand to his lips, and said—

"To-morrow, dearest Helen, shall decide our fate."

The morrow did so; and the look of ineffable sweetness—the fulness of affection which beamed from Lady Helen's eyes, as she gracefully bowed assent, was one of those beautiful visions which may pass, but can never be forgotten.

A few hundred yards brought them home. The feelings of the mother had, for a time, superseded all others. Lady Blankisle hurried from the window where she had watched her daughter's return, and betrayed deep anxiety for her safety. A bright smile, a wave of the

handkerchief, assured her all was right ; and, not till then did Mowbray read the gracious assurance of continued favour. This reminded him of one important inquiry ; he had just time to say —

“ Must it be your father ? shall I address the marquess first ? ”

“ Shame on your want of gallantry ! Mamma, if you please. We ladies always claim priority,” answered Lady Helen Fawndove, with one of her archest smiles, and hastened to her mother’s fond embrace.

CHAPTER II.

THE LETTER OF BUSINESS.

" For over all men hangs a doubtful fate.
One gains by what another is bereft :
The frugal destinies have only left
A common bank of happiness below,
Maintained, like nature, by an ebb and flow."

HOWARD.

It has been said by one man, and echoed by hundreds, that woman is never so agreeable as after a glass of champagne, or while she is on horseback. It remained for us to shew—though we do not recommend the experiment too often—that a tumble from a horse can make the fair rider absolutely irresistible. That such may be the case, our hero furnished a convincing proof.

Mowbray, having once decided upon advancing to the goal of his earthly wishes, could

think of nothing else. As usual, he sat by Lady Helen at dinner, but his attentions were unusually marked. Lady Blankisle was in ecstasies ; and, after the ladies had retired, she made her daughter give a second edition of her accident, and sought for additions, with explanatory notes, by such subtle and tender inquiries, as — “ Was he not dreadfully alarmed ? and what did he do ? Did you faint ? Did your head fall on the ground ? Did you soon recover ? and what did he say ? ” Excepting, however, a somewhat unwonted brightness in the eyes and cheeks, the anxious mother perceived no new light ; so carefully did Lady Helen shroud words and feelings which she treasured as sacred.

Even Mowbray, the model of fashionable indifference, though not exposed to leading questions, proceeded less ably in appearing himself. One moment he forgot to pass the bottle ; another, was accused of having a standing bumper before him. He raised an empty glass to drink it off ; or took the bottle to add to a glass too full to hold another drop. One man asked him —

“ Did you see Lord Betting ?”

“ Eh ! oh, yes ! she took the first gate in beautiful style.”

“ She ! why, d—— it, Mowbray, I mean Lord Betting ; and he rode his stallion, the bright chestnut.”

“ Ay, very true ; I forgot : did I speak of the gray ?”

The querist, thinking Mowbray was affecting ignorance, turned to his more rational neighbour. In short, for once, Mowbray’s good breeding was at fault ; and his efforts were unavailing to join with those who revived the chase in their cups,

“ Fought their battles o’er again,
And told how fields were won.”

Having detected himself on the point of saying “ dear Helen,” instead of “ dear marquess,” he stopped half way in the name, as he once made the last of the De la Beres do ; and, leaving the company to wonder what had led him to bless the regions below, he continued silent the rest of the evening.

At a late hour the gentlemen sought the drawing-room ; and once more a game of chess with Lady Helen atoned for the torture of a separation which had seemed an age. They neither played better, nor quicker, than on former occasions.

On the following morning Mowbray arose early ; his sleep had been broken, his dreams by night less happy than his thoughts by day. Lady Helen's accident recurred with all the frightful distortions of creative fancy. He beheld her struggling in the river, and his Arab plunging by her side ;—he felt the earth break from beneath his feet, and his breath failing as he sank through the air ;—he stood by the river, he heard a voice which cried, “ Save me ! save me ! Hear me, ere we part for ever ! ” He strove to plunge to her relief, but his feet were rooted to the shore. He saw her sinking, her hands stretched towards him, and the words, “ Hear me ! hear me ! ” lingered on the waters which had closed around her sinking form. The agony of that moment awoke the dreamer.

“ It was but a dream ! ” repeated Mowbray,

again and again, as he wiped the cold drops of perspiration which stood upon his brow. It was, indeed, but a dream ; but such was its vivid impression, that he dared not turn to sleep again. Quitting his couch, he went to the window, and was soon revived in feeling by the freshness of the air ; in thought, by the bright and cheering rays of the rising sun. He looked on the gorgeous canopy which shrouded the breaking day, and hailed it as the omen of his approaching happiness. The toilet completed, he wandered forth, and mechanically sought the conservatories, where the myrtle, and geranium, or Lady Helen's favoured sweets, were gathered and arranged with taste and feeling, which spoke more of the poet than the man of fashion. With this offering, hid from vulgar eyes, he re-turned to his apartment, to await the hour of breakfast.

“ *Bien bon jour, monsieur,*” said François, with a respectful bow, yet that familiarity—if such it should be termed—which allows the foreign servant to express a kind feeling, and greet his master in the morning, and

wish a “*bon soir*,” or “*felicissima notte*,” without offending.

“*Est-ce que monsieur a bien dormi?*” inquired François, receiving no answer to his first salutation.

“Ah! François, is that you?” said Mowbray, roused from the contemplation of the flowers which he had gathered.

“*Oui, monsieur, I vas frightened to mi death to find you not in di bed; I hope, sar, you carry yourselve vel to-day.*”

“Never better, François; but I could not sleep, I had the night-mare.”

“*Ah! ah! c'est cela, monsieur; I vas tink you had mounted your gray mare, and galloped avay.*”

And François ventured to laugh at his own joke. He had read his master’s happy expression, and was not deceived in the tribute of an applauding smile.

“But what is that?” asked Mowbray, changing from gay to grave, and pointing to a paper on the floor.

“*Dat, sar,*” said François, going to the paper, and picking it up from the floor; “*dat,*

*sare, is di lettare I vas give you last night ven
you vas swear à l'Anglaise at di insult of a
vafer, and throwed it avay."*

"Did I?" asked Mowbray, trying to remember the circumstance. "Well, we will be more gracious this morning and condescend to read it."

François delivered the letter into his master's hand; its shape was somewhat suspicious; it had not the decided oblong which bills assume when folded into letters, but there was a folding which smacked of the counter, and the fastening was a full-grown red wafer.

Mowbray, who feared no duns, but hated business, looked first at the shape, then at the segment of an unstamped wafer which peeped like a young red moon, from the paper, and, lastly, at the writing. This was decidedly that of a gentleman; and, though the letters were tremulously formed, he fancied that he ought to know the hand-writing. After indulging this idle curiosity, he tore it open and read as follows :

“London, Nov. 18, 1891.

“ Melton, my beloved son, will you ever forgive your unhappy father ? We are utterly ruined ! My partner, a villain in whom I placed unbounded confidence, has gambled in the funds, lost enormously, used the assets of the house, compromised the firm, and fled with all he could collect to America. We are beggared, my son ; beggared and disgraced for ever ! For myself I care not, but oh ! my heart is bleeding—breaking—for you, whose name is in the firm, and whose property is liable. Can you forgive me ? Heaven is my witness with what pure intentions your name was added to the firm—it was but to aid you in receiving at my death the wealth for which I toiled in my life. Fly to me, my son ; tell me you forgive—aid me in this hour of trial—my strength and sight are failing—my head is bowed with sorrow. Your poor father, who has survived the wreck of home, and proudly scorned a sneering world, dares not face this withering blow. Hasten, I implore you, to your affectionate and ruined father,

“ JOHN DE MOWBRAY.”

We have given this letter without break or comment, to the reader's perusal. It was not thus that Mowbray read it through. The first words of tenderness—the endearing sound of “beloved son,” from a father stern, distant, cold, and unbending, made him doubt if the terms were intended for himself; the mere date of “London,” had caught his eye; again he looked at the address; it was, though changed, his father’s hand. He saw the City post-mark, and turning the page to glance at the signature, he read—“Your affectionate and ruined father, John de Mowbray.”

He fixed upon these few words as if his eyes were spell-bound. He felt as if his senses were stunned; he clasped his forehead, pressed back his clustered hair, and compelling, as it were by force, the throbbing brain, he perused the contents from beginning to end. The letter fell from his hand, and, with the silence of despair, he folded his arms and gazed unconsciously upon the fatal document.

“*Monsieur! mais monsieur! sar!*” said François, alarmed, and speaking with kindly interest. Receiving no answer, he ventured

to approach, and kneeling to pick up the letter, presented it to his master. It was received mechanically, crushed and crumpled with convulsive force, and cast away. Without speaking, Mowbray sank upon a chair, supported his head with upraised arms, and seemed to be lost in contemplation of the flowers he had gathered and arranged.

“ Poor, poor Helen !” he said at length ; and presently, as if a new feeling had arisen amidst the wreck of all his hopes—as if the voice of a father’s love had called from amidst the ruins which had fallen on his head, he added, “ And, alas ! my poor father !—yes, your son will come ; you shall not call in vain.”

François began to feel that he was *de trop*, and, with a delicacy sometimes found in the humblest station, was retreating as silently as possible ; when the sound of a large bell spoke with its iron tongue the approach of breakfast hour.

“ What’s that ?” cried Mowbray, starting on his feet and looking wildly around him.

“ *Di avant courier for di brakefast ;*” and François, as he still held the door in his hand,

added, “*mais, peut-être, monsieur vill prefare di brakefast vid himself?*”

“Thank you, François, yes, I think I—no, no, François, leave me to myself; I shall descend as usual.”

And Mowbray turned the key upon his faithful servant; and, for the first time in his life, knew what it was to feel alone in the world of misery.

The usages of Blankisle Hall gave a delightful latitude to every guest; with the exception of dinner, there might be said to be no general meeting. There was a public breakfast table, and a stated hour for those who choose to attend; while they who preferred their own hour and society, had a distinct service at their command. In winter, however, this privilege was less sought, and, with few exceptions, the guests assembled in the fine old dining-room; where, in honour of the season and old English hospitality, the ample sideboard and table were spread.

Lady Blankisle, the marquess, and their daughter, never breakfasted in private; need

we add, that Mowbray always formed one of the many ?

“ How shall I meet her ? ” he exclaimed, as, clasping his hands in agony he paced the room, and strove to call forth his innate strength of character. “ How shall I parry the sneering jests of heartless man ? ” he asked himself, as he started at his wild and haggard looks reflected from the glass. “ But it must, and it shall be done ! ” he said ; and, raising the fatal letter from the floor, he restored it, as well as might be, to its original form. He forced himself to read it again ; and, softened by the appeal of a father’s affection, he kissed the characters which called him “ my son,” and fell on his knees at the foot of his bed : he raised his voice to the Father in Heaven whose ears are ever open to the prayers of the sorrowful.

It was no slight effort ; but, with features, dress, and manner, composed as usual, he descended to the dining-room, the very room in which, but the evening before, he was lost in the reveries of coming bliss — now he

shunned the depths of thought. As usual, he took his seat beside Lady Helen ; as usual, he mingled with the crew of mirth, touched the light wave of fancy's stream, which sparkled with his strokes of wit : he did more, he drank and ate, though every mouthful threatened to choke his utterance for ever.

Thus, with the many, his efforts were successful ; but there was one who could not be deceived—there was one to whom the lines of sorrow were as distinctly visible as the traces of convulsive force on the letter he had endeavoured to restore. Lady Helen read his altered looks—mental or bodily, she marked a pang of agony upon the tell-tale lip ; she saw the light which sparkled on the stream, but, to her, it only lit the depth of suffering beneath. With food untasted, she shuddered as she watched the gaiety of spirits which seemed unnatural, and counted with anxiety every moment until they rose from table.

“ Melton, you are ill !” whispered Lady Helen, the moment she could command his ear.

“ No, on my honour ! when did you ever

see me gayer?" asked Mowbray, trying to look the character, as he still saw some eyes were upon them.

"This is unkindness—mockery," she said in an under tone as they proceeded to the library.

"Helen—dearest Helen!" said Mowbray the moment they were alone, and speaking with looks which told at once the struggles and devotion of his heart—his lips refused to say more.

"For Heaven's sake speak! tell me, are you ill? say what has happened—speak, speak, for Heaven's sake, speak!" cried Lady Helen, as she strove to read the causes of a change so sudden and so dreadful.

"Helen, my own beloved!" said Mowbray, as he resumed the power of speech; "this kindness, those looks, unman me." And, to avoid the expression which confessed how deeply he was loved, or, to conceal the tears which he could not control, he turned away his head, and hid his brow beneath his hand.

"You would not kill me—would Melton wish me otherwise than kind?" asked Lady

Helen faintly ; and, scarcely knowing how to interpret his manner, her strength failed, and she sank on a seat by the window.

“ Wish you otherwise ! oh ! that I might wish you ever, ever what you are ; but, Helen, there are duties which call me hence. Nay, hear me—sink not—pray with me for strength we both shall need. My poor father is stricken and desolate ; he implores me to fly to his assistance.”

“ And does Melton think me so selfish—so heartless in a daughter’s love, that I would not spare him at a father’s call. Go, Mowbray, go ! our meeting will be but the happier when you have paid a duty so sacred.” And poor Lady Helen’s eyes smiled through her tears as she thought she had heard the worst.

“ Helen ! this day I must leave you.”

“ Not give me until to-morrow ? Do not despise me if I ask it.”

“ Despise you, dearest, pure, perfect, and adored ; would that—but it may not be. This day we must part ; and it may be long, very long, ere we meet again.”

“ Oh, Melton ! is there greater misery in

store?" asked Lady Helen with beseeching agony, as her fears were alarmed anew.

"Promise to be firm, and I will tell you all."

"I will, I will."

"Promise to meet me after I have spoken to your mother, one hour hence."

"I do."

"May Heaven be merciful! bless thee, and support thee!" As Mowbray concluded this fervent wish he pressed Lady Helen's hand to his lips. One drop had fallen purer, brighter than the gems which sparkled in the ring she wore; another was succeeding; the hand was still sealed to the lips, when a footstep was heard, and the Marchioness of Blank-isle appeared in sight.

"Your mother!" said Mowbray, relinquishing the hand.

"How can I meet her now?" asked Lady Helen, shrouding her tears within her handkerchief.

"I will prevent it," said Mowbray, making an instant effort to repress his feelings.
"Happy and blessed in sparing you one mo-

ment's pain ; would that on me alone should fall the weight of coming woe ! Adieu ! be firm—remember your promise."

" I promise all — adieu ! " answered Lady Helen in a low and silver tone, as Mowbray left her to meet the marchioness. Once he turned his head ere the deep angle of the wall concealed her from his sight : once more he was met by a look so exquisitely touching, so fraught with beauty, sorrow, and love, that it seemed to fall upon his heart like rays of holy light. He felt as if it had passed by some electric chain, and, in one brief instant, stamped its image for evermore.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOUDOIR, OR PARTING SCENES.

“ Famine is in thy cheeks,
Need and oppression staring in thy looks,
Contempt and beggary hang on thy back.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WE cannot precisely say what was the propelling force which urged Lady Blankisle to intrude upon the lovers. It certainly was an aberration from her usual course, that is, when the subordinate bodies moved in accordance with the system she ordained.

It is possible that for once she had read the anxious looks betrayed by Lady Helen at the breakfast-table, and, linking this with the events of yesterday, thought the time had arrived for a favourable crisis. Mammas, as well as little children, often dread to be left in the dark.

" My dear Lady Blankisle, I am delighted to meet you, and alone ; you must take my arm," said Mowbray, as he gracefully made the offer ; and, drawing her ladyship's arm within his own, led her from the recess in which he stood.

" Indeed !" replied her ladyship, with a most gracious smile, and, as she looked upon the arm thus gallantly possessed, trying to catch sight of her daughter ; " indeed, I was in search of a book, and with your permission, if you will but allow me ——"

" Impossible, my dear Lady Blankisle ; you must suffer me to avail myself of the chance which has thrown me in your way. I have an anxious favour to request, and was about to seek you."

" Indeed ! what can Mr. Melton de Mowbray ask that I should not feel pleasure in granting ? "

" May I request an audience in private—be admitted within the recesses of your boudoir ? "

" Oh ! by all means—I shall be delighted

to shew it to you. Did you ever see my collection of butterflies and minerals?"

"It is an honour I never had."

"Oh, dear! I shall be so happy to display my curiosities: so few men in the country think of more than their horses and dogs—this way, let me be your pilot."

Lady Blankisle's sanctum was up stairs; a delightful snuggery at the end of a suite of rooms. They had to pass (that is, her ladyship thought proper to pass,) through the old hall, where divers of the guests were hovering round a large wood fire, whilst two of the party were engaged at billiards.

"Oh, do come! we are so glad to see you," cried some of the party who caught sight of their hostess upon Mowbray's arm; "you must join us, we have just made up a match between his grace and Lady Jane."

"You know, my dears," said Lady Blankisle, "it is a game I do not understand, and Mr. Melton de Mowbray has promised to inspect my collections."

"Shame! shame!" cried the good-tem-

pered Duke of Dublin, addressing Mowbray, “running away with our hostess! you will ride with us at two?”

“Mark me two,” cried the ethereal Lady Jane to her sister, who had taken up the office of marker; “that must be a cannon.”

“It won’t, for a thousand!” cried the Duke of Dublin watching the table. “The balls will kiss; I told you so.”

“I am so angry,” said Lady Jane, disappointed of the expected cannon; and, turning archly to Lady Blankisle, who had lingered with a moment’s affected indifference, she added, “that provoking kiss! my dear marchioness, I wish you could forbid them.”

“You forget, Lady Jane,” said Mowbray, “that ladies never preside at the board of green-cloth; you must submit to your loss, or appeal to the marquess. Come, my dear marchioness, shall we pursue the safer game we proposed?” addressing the last words to his hostess, and leading her towards the old oak staircase.

“Mark my words, if you want the cannon,” whispered Lady Jane to her sister; “without a match all games are insipid; she

understands that rule, if she knows nothing else."

"Quite agree, my dear Jane; she is a kind-hearted being, and always dying to bestow her favours on the *poor*; ere long, *we* shall wear them."

"So, you won't ride?" cried the Duke of Dublin, repeating his question to Mowbray when his back was turned.

"No, duke! you see I am engaged."

"For the day?"

"Ay, duke, and for the morrow too."

There was a sudden change—a deep and thrilling tone which accompanied these few words. Lady Jane, on the point of attempting another cannon, dropped the mace, and paused to look at the speaker; others followed her example, but they only saw his back, while he led the marchioness away.

"Was that De Mowbray's voice?" asked Lady Jane, who seemed to doubt the fact.

"His, or his spirit's!" answered his grace of Dublin.

"Then it must have been the latter, for it was the *gravest* sound I ever heard," said

Lady Jane, laughing gaily at her own joke—as most people do when it is a bad one.

“It was se-pul-chral!” uttered a fat matter-of-fact dull youth, with a voice like a muffled drum.

“Like a minute gun at sea,” rejoined Lady Jane with the solemnest echo she could command: “so, here’s for a cannon,” she added in her usual gay tone; and this time effected her aim without an unfortunate kiss.

We leave the billiard-players to enjoy their merry play upon words and the magic green, to declare that Mowbray, for once, appeared to be serious, and spoke as if he felt what he said: while they pursue their jokes, we will follow the marchioness to her boudoir.

“Is not this lovely? are they not beautiful? that is by Carlo Dolce, is it not a gem? this cup is by Cellini, is it not perfect?” or some such string of inquiries were made by Lady Blankisle, as she appeared to be only intent upon displaying her cabinets.

Mowbray answered mechanically while he was preparing for the task upon which he dreaded to enter.

Passing from one object of *virtù* to another, her ladyship took up a morocco case, and touching a spring, displayed a superb set of brilliants.

"I do so hope you will admire them," she said with one of her ugliest smiles.

"It were impossible to do otherwise."

"They are of the finest water; but the design—the taste of these sprigs, which bend like the waving corn?"

"Quite perfect."

"Indeed! now, I am delighted; they belonged to the marquess's great-grandmother, and have been handed down like heir-looms of the family, and I ventured, with the marquess's permission, to have them reset. I am so glad you admire the style."

"Could not be better; but, Lady Blankisle——"

"Oh, I must tell you of dear Helen's obstinacy; she insisted upon my wearing them at the next drawing-room, though I told her they were intended as a *cadeau* for herself, and should never be worn until she married."

“Lady Blankisle,” said Mowbray, sternly, “may I request you to take a chair?”

The manner and tone of Mowbray at once rivetted the marchioness’s attention; setting down the diamonds, she looked at his pale yet handsome features, and shrank beneath the dark orbs which seemed to read her thoughts, and flashed as brightly as the jewels in the casket.

“Mr. De Mowbray,” said the marchioness as she took a chair, “I fear you are unwell; pray, sit down. I hope, in your kind anxiety for Lady Helen’s safety, you did not suffer yesterday; are you quite sure you escaped all injury?”

“All, I assure you; but I have been taught the value of time, and dare not delay the subject which presses upon my mind.”

“Pray, forgive my idle vanity—we will think no more of these baubles. I did not dream that you had any thing of importance to say.”

“To me, Lady Blankisle, the words I am about to speak are of the deepest import; you may have remarked my devotion to your daughter?”

“ I am sure you will feel that a mother’s anxiety for her daughter’s happiness needs no plea for watchfulness ; and I do confess, that I have lately thought—I will add, that I have observed with pleasure, that your attentions were marked.”

“ It is on this point, Lady Blankisle, on this theme that I wish, yet tremble, to address you.”

“ On such a subject the marquess might, probably, be deemed a fitter person than myself ; but my opinions are always in such harmony with my dear lord’s, that, if you think proper to make me the bearer of your words, I will gladly report them.”

“ My only wish ——”

“ Let me add,” continued the marchioness, interrupting Mowbray in his attempt to explain, “ it were now idle to doubt your intentions ; and, knowing as I do, the marquess’s sentiments, I may relieve your mind by saying, no man could seek the hand of Lady Helen whom we should deem so worthy as yourself.”

“ Spare me, Lady Blankisle, spare me these words of kindness !”

“ Am I mistaken ?” asked the marchioness, with an air of surprise ; “ can it be that I am deceived in thinking your attentions were valued by my daughter ? were they unwelcome ?”

“ Would that they had been ; would that hatred could dwell in one so gentle and perfect ; happier for both, than to know how deeply her affections are pledged !” said Mowbray, rising from his seat and indulging in a burst of feeling he could not control.

“ How am I to read you ?” asked the marchioness, with still greater surprise ; “ even the feelings of a mother should not be trifled with. What obstacle can rise between yourself and happiness, if you receive our approval, and really love the being for whose hand you plead ?”

“ Really love ! if there be truth on earth—but, alas ! professions are now but mockery. I came not to plead ; I have not asked for the hand you are willing to bestow ; I came, Lady Blankisle, to resign the affections I had won ; to say, I must leave you this day ; depart within an hour to return to more !”

The marchioness turned deadly pale ; and, while she drew herself back in her chair, she regarded Mowbray with a look in which scorn, anger, and indignation, struggled for mastery ; her whole frame trembled with emotion, and it was a minute or more ere she could give utterance to her feelings.

“ Sir,” she said, her voice trembling with passion, “ the name of De Mowbray was crowned with honour on the field of Agincourt, and has passed without a taint from age to age ! ”

Mowbray could not refuse a slight bow.

“ If poverty,” she continued, in a more bitter tone, “ fell upon your house, and commerce degraded its pride of ancestry, there still was honour in their dealings ; but you, it would seem, forgetting this jewel which your fathers prized so highly, trust to a tradesman’s wealth for insulting the feelings of a noble family with impunity.”

“ Madam ! ” said Mowbray, who knew the early history of her ladyship’s life, “ you, whose independence I honour for having pursued the honest calling of a governess, might have spared the reproach of poverty,

and honoured the industry of my unhappy father."

"Your father I might honour," said the marchioness, somewhat disconcerted by the unexpected allusion, "but you, sir, who have dazzled with your wealth to win, betray, and desert, are base and unworthy of the name you bear!"

"Will your ladyship hear me? Lady Helen, at least, has not been dazzled or deceived; she will believe me honourable, and, if your ladyship will read that letter," presenting Sir John de Mowbray's, "I may, perhaps, be judged less worthy of your reproach and scorn."

The marchioness extended her trembling hand to receive the letter, yet looked as if her patrician fingers would be contaminated by a document so crumpled and doubtful in appearance.

"What may this be?" she asked.

"Papers of importance are sometimes cast aside as waste and worthless; this, and the distraction of the writer, must plead for the

outward appearance ; the contents will speak for themselves, they seal my doom," and, folding his arms, Mowbray watched in silence the effect of a perusal.

The marchioness's attention was instantly fixed by the opening words ; as she proceeded, her countenance changed to wonder and fell to despair. With her mouth open, the nether lip drooping, her eyes devoured the words : and, while they read one line, glanced eagerly at the following ; a second time she read it through, and then, as if the better feelings of a parent prevailed, she said, "Indeed, Mr. De Mowbray, I feel for your poor father ; I am, indeed, very, very sorry ;" nay, these words were accompanied by a certain twinkling of the eye which threatened a tear, though we know not what proportion of this tribute fell to the share of father and son. "Most distressing, and most extraordinary !" said the marchioness, once more fixing her eyes on the letter. "Can there be no mistake, no doubt ? Are you certain of Sir John de Mowbray's hand ?"

"Positive! You perceive, Lady Blankisle, I can no longer offend you by the insolence of wealth."

"Forgive me, Mr. De Mowbray, if a mother's anxiety doubted your honour for an instant; still more forgive me when I spoke of poverty. You answered rightly, I have, indeed, been taught to shudder at the word, and believe it —"

"A curse, but, I hope, not a crime," said Mowbray, supplying words which Lady Blankisle hesitated to pronounce.

"If not a crime, and I almost dared to call it such, it is a curse so galling, bitter, and degrading, that it saps our strongest principles as rust destroys the iron bar; it is, indeed, a curse which humbles the proudest to the dust!"

As Lady Blankisle spoke, she shuddered at the recollections she had conjured up, and seemed to writhe anew beneath the trials she had once known as a penniless orphan, an insulted governess.

"Never!" she said, half aloud; "oh, never may my daughter know this dark affliction!"

“ Let the curse be on me alone ; I come to resign, and not to urge a claim which now it were villany to seek.”

“ Do you leave to-day ?”

“ Immediately, but I felt the explanation I have given due to yourself and the marquess.”

“ May I inquire how you travel ?”

“ I hope to arrive at Dorchester in time to save the mail.”

“ Mr. De Mowbray travel in the mail ! how truly I feel for your dreadful reverses. Shall I ring for Annette ; perhaps you have some orders to give ?” asked Lady Blankisle, who, having recovered her first shock, began to think that the next best manœuvre would be, to get her long dreamt-of son-in-law out of the house as quickly as possible.

“ I will claim your ladyship’s kindness a little longer ; I have yet a sadder task, and crave your permission to impart to Lady Helen the sacrifice which honour obliges me to make.”

“ That task will be best entrusted to a mother’s tongue.”

"I have promised to reveal the truth to Lady Helen's ears."

"It were unwise to do so. Does she know your sentiments?"

"But too well—yesterday."

"Yesterday!" repeated Lady Blankisle; "and yesterday you received the letter now within your hand."

"I did, but it was unopened until this morning; do not again suspect my honour. Grant, I implore you, the last and only favour I can ever claim; I beseech on my knees," and the proud De Mowbray humbled himself to bend to the mother of Lady Helen.

"Rise, pray arise," said the marchioness, as wavering in purpose; "does my daughter expect you?"

"I have her promise, but would not you should deem the meeting clandestine."

"Lady Helen Fawndove may have promised rashly, but will not forget the duty which is due to her mother. I must seek her apartment," and the marchioness moved towards the door.

" If Lady Helen joins in the prayer ?" said Mowbray, making one more appeal as he seized the marchioness's hand, and again implored the boon which he had already asked.

" Perhaps," was the doubtful reply ; and, requesting Mowbray to await in the library, Lady Blankisle departed to her daughter.

Mowbray, left to himself, needed the pause of a few minutes ere he ventured to re-pass the party in the old hall ; the casket of brilliants was still open, his eyes involuntarily fixed upon the bridal present ; he had not the power to close it from sight, but, rushing from the mockery of faded hope, he descended at once to the library.

" Stop thief! stop thief!" cried the merry Duke of Dublin, as he saw Mowbray hurrying past : " why, Mowbray, one would think you had been turned out of the cabinet, or robbed Lady Blankisle's tower, and were running off with her jewels—is it so ?"

" Shrewd guess, Duke," said Mowbray, slackening his pace, and struggling for self-possession ; " an act becoming a *blood* like

myself—though I am no colonel.” He never blessed a bad pun before; now, however, he did, as it made a diversion in his favour.

“Bad enough to be good,” cried one, and laughed.

Mirth is catching—one and all did the same—and, while Mowbray proceeded to the library, he had only time to hear from Lady Jane.

“What has become of your solemn engagement, which was to last till—to-morrow?” speaking the last word with all possible pathos.

“Quite off!—does Lady Jane forget the school-boy’s adage—that to-morrows never come?”

“Then you’ll ride to-day?” asked his Grace of Dublin.

“By all means—I fully intend it,” answered Mowbray with indifference; and, waving his hand, he passed from the joyous party with a smile on his face, and despair in his heart.

As Mowbray entered the library, it was some relief to find himself alone; still greater to close the double doors, and shut out the voice of merry laughter which jarred upon his ears.

As his feet fell upon the carpet it sank like moss, and returned no echo ; around him were the spirits of the dead, held captive by the art of man : the immortality of thought laid in its winding-sheet—the spotless page—and spell-bound by the blackened type ; spirits ! blessed spirits of the dead, shadows of the living, absent, and unknown ! which come “ if we do call,” yet wait our bidding—for ever silent as the grave, yet answering our vision with “ a small still voice,” which falls as gently as the air we breathe upon the finer organs of the brain, and is passed in mystery within the portals of the heart ; our slaves, companions, and our household gods—such are our books, and by such alone was our hero surrounded. If a something of the solemnity and calm becoming the abode of spirits entered his bosom, and, aided by the silent tread, gave the power of reflection, his thoughts held communion with himself alone ; the host around stood as a company of mutes, unheeded and uncalled for.

“ Am I not dreaming ? ” asked Mowbray of himself, as he paced the room and struggled in vain to compose his thoughts ; “ see her no

more! or meet to part for ever! Impossible! it cannot be! this is the mockery of sleep—of wild, unbridled fancy. I have not awakened yet; I see her still borne on the crystal stream; her voice is in my ear, soft, silvery as ever.—‘Save me! save me! hear me, ere we part!’ she cries; and the words are prolonged like the distant echoes of a plaintive air.—Do I not see her?—there!—before me now!—still as we parted but a little time since; is not that look of beauty, sorrow, hope, and love, still turned to greet my coming? I dream no longer!—Helen! my own, my beloved Helen!” he exclaimed, with the fervour of impassioned melody, and hastened to the spot where he had left Lady Helen to stay the intrusion of the marchioness.

Alas! it was but the vivid power of the mind’s imagining—a spirit less substantial than the soul of thought, imprisoned in the lettered page: it was but a picture, painted on the tablets of the brain; but one so clear, so fresh, so beautiful, that it held, for an instant, the force of truth, and Mowbray believed that he beheld the original.

"Then what is life?" he said, as he approached the window and the delusion passed; "if thus we are the sport of fancy, how do we know that we live? What is reality? or what, indeed, is life, but one continued dream from which only the icy tomb of death can——?"

At this moment the turning of a door-handle broke upon these visionary meditations; an instant after, an inner door was opened, and in walked one of the marchioness's long London footmen. There is an impertinent and obtrusive reality about these powdered six-feet puppies, which is well calculated to call us from the regions of romance.

The fellow entered, and not immediately perceiving the object of his search, he cast his eyes round the room with philosophic pride, till they met the advancing figure of Mr. De Mowbray. Having approached within speaking distance, he said—

"The Marquess of Blankisle, sir, requests the honour of seeing you in his study;" and pointing to a door which led from the library, he bowed and retired.

Servants are the mirrors of their masters,

still more so of their mistresses. In the outward manner of the man there was nothing wanting in respect—his words were studiously polite ; but, in the eye there was a laughing insolence, which caught the quick observation of Mowbray, and in that he read his condemnation.

“ I dream no longer,” he said, as he gasped for breath, and felt as if his throbbing heart would burst ; “ this is reality, though the voice which haunts me still be but a dream : this, too, this is a reality,—taking from his bosom the lock of hair which Lady Helen had bestowed but yesterday,—“ a treasure I would have staked my life to guard, and now must yield to honour. And is there no hope—no chance ? may I not hoard it like a miser, and be blest in secret ? No, no ; perish the selfish thought ! Helen must be free, unshackled, and I—I must depart—go and be seen no more—dead to her, the world, and happiness ! ” Pressing the beautiful ringlet to his lips, he covered it with kisses and wept—ay, wept with a woman’s tenderness—a mother’s agony, when parting from the lamb which death has stricken ; and, for a few short moments, his

summons — all — was forgotten but the treasured relic, bathed in his tears and worshipped — oh ! how fervently worshipped, with the kiss of parting.

These feelings must not be deemed an exaggeration. Let it be remembered, that that man knows not the value of wealth whose every want and luxury has been supplied from infancy : to such a one the first impression of treasure must be a something beyond the power of purchase ; it must be a gift hallowed by the hand of love—pure, devoted, and unbought ;—such a treasure Mowbray felt that he possessed and was about to lose, lose too, at a moment when he was beggared in the worldly sense of the word, and taught, for Lady Helen's sake, the value of wealth.

Words are but poor agents to represent the intensity of moments like these ; they seem to tarry like the painter's touch, which strives to give the flash of lightning. Rapidly, however, as these thoughts were passing in the mind of Mowbray, their current was frozen by a somewhat violent ring of the marquess's bell. The sound recalled him to himself, and without

waiting for another summons he entered the study, and found the marquess and his wife : the latter arose, and, having with a distant salutation pointed to a chair beside the marquess, resumed her seat in silence.

“ My dear Mowbray—my dear Mr. Melton de Mowbray,”—said the marquess, recovering from a *lapsus linguae* in his lesson, into which his kind heart had betrayed him,—“ I feel, in common with the marchioness, the honour you intended by proposing for our daughter—an honour which, indeed, I—an honour which, truly, we——”

“ My Lord, this is but mockery,” said Mowbray, with firm, though mournful calmness. “ My lesson has been short, but I have already learnt to feel that honours flow not from the beggar’s hand ; I have already learnt the sting of poverty, and you, who have ever been kind, will not, I am sure, add insult to misfortune.”

“ Indeed, indeed, my dear Mowb—Mr. De Mowbray ! I feel for you as a father—I have loved you as a son—and, as a father, I had hoped to call you ours.”

“ Did your ladyship ring?—I mistook my lord’s bell,” said a servant, who addressed the question to the marchioness, though his lordship’s bell had rung.

“ It is of no consequence—nothing now,” answered the marchioness, who rejoiced at the check which had been given to her lord’s fatherly tenderness.

“ You forget, my dear marquess, that Mr. De Mowbray must leave us ere long, and only awaits your answer to his request.”

“ True, my love; and be assured, Mr. De Mowbray, that it is painful—that we do really honour—but that we regret and quite agree, that—that——”

“ Forgive me, my kind lord, if I spare you the pain of denying the only favour I can ask, or you bestow. Madam,” continued Mowbray, addressing the marchioness, and summoning courage to know the worst, “ has the marquess your permission to grant the interview I have implored?”

“ The marquess,” replied Lady Blankisle, agrees with myself in thinking that, having resigned your pretensions to Lady Helen’s

hand, all further communication must cease.
Is it not so, marquess?"

" Why — yes — certainly my love ; yes —
but, if — —"

" You have heard the marquess's opinion,"
said Lady Blankisle to Mowbray, cutting short
all " buts" and " ifs;" " and now, sir," she
continued, " it might be as well to close for
ever a subject so painful to all parties ; yet,
be assured, you possess our highest opinion,
our best of wishes." With which words, the
marchioness extended her cold and skinny
hand to say, " Adieu!"

" Madam !" said Mowbray, as he calmly
folded his arms, and, with a haughty bow,
refused this hollow mark of parting friend-
ship, " I read your suspicions ; and, were I
that which you think me capable of being,
I should be unworthy of the honour I refuse.
I spare you the bitterness of reproach ; I could
be bitter ; I could speak with the keenness of
a dagger, and taunt you with the bitterness of
gall. But the mother of Lady Helen Fawn-
dove is shielded by the recollection of her
daughter's excellence ; for her sake, for the

sake of the being to whom but yesterday I offered all that I believed to be mine, I am silent on all but my own defence. To your ladyship, and in the presence of the marquess, I probably am speaking for the last time, and, in justice to myself, let me ask, How have I acted ? Have I concealed, for a moment, the ruin in which my poor father is involved ? have I not first declared the truth to yourself? have I attempted to deceive you by the shadow of hope, or sued for the hand you wished to bestow ? have I not resigned that which to me is more precious than wealth, and sought an interview to set your daughter free ? Such, and such only, was my honourable purpose ; if a mother's voice fail in doing that which mine might have effected, the fault is with yourself."

" My daughter, Mr. De Mowbray, can have no will but that of her mother. She will be satisfied with my decision, and has no wish to see you more. She says, she even begs me ——"

" Lady Blankisle," said Mowbray, sternly, and interrupting the marchioness in her hesi-

tation, “ let us part ; pardon the feelings which force me to say, *I know your daughter* ; and I pray you, say not words which would lessen the respect I would fain preserve for her mother. It is enough ; you refuse me this melancholy duty I have prayed for as a boon : be the consequences what they may, I can say no more. Your ladyship must be aware, that now there are other duties which call me from you for ever.”

“ One moment — one word more — this, Mr. De Mowbray, I believe to be yours,” said the marchioness, with emotion, and positively blushing, as she presented a small white satin case, embroidered with some simple flowers.

“ Mine ! Lady Blankisle, I know it not. I never saw it until this moment !” said Mowbray, with unfeigned astonishment.

“ Yes, Mr. De Mowbray,” continued the marchioness, still extending her hand ; “ I believe, if you examine the contents, you will own it to be yours.”

A sudden thought flashed across Mowbray’s mind ; he seized the case, unfolded the enve-

lope, and saw the lock of hair he had given Lady Helen but yesterday.

“ How is this? how—why—are you possessed of this?” he asked, scarcely believing the evidence of his senses.

“ It is yours, Mr. De Mowbray; and I have blushed for the error of my daughter in accepting that which she now restores.”

“ Lady Blankisle, you try me beyond endurance,” said Mowbray, fixing his eyes upon the marchioness as they flashed with indignant anger. “ No! thus restored, this is not mine; and thus (throwing the hair and envelope into the fire) I destroy the evidence which made you blush, but not for Lady Helen’s errors. I seek not, I ask not to know how you became possessed of yonder perishable lock; would that my contempt could pass as quickly!”

“ Your feelings, Mr. De Mowbray,” replied the marchioness, calmly but contemptuously, “ lead you to forget the respect which is due to the marquess and myself.”

“ My dear marquess, forgive me,” said Mowbray, extending his hand to the kind host he was about to leave; “ and, if my thoughts

have wronged me, Lady Blankisle, of you, too, I crave forgiveness."

To love without doubt is impossible. If, for an instant, Mowbray admitted a doubt of Lady Helen's firmness, he might be forgiven. There was more than enough to bewilder his judgment. What had passed between the mother and daughter was unknown. How such unlooked-for news were received; why the lock of hair was in Lady Blankisle's hand; whether there had been the wish or struggle to fulfil her promise of meeting—all was unknown; and, with little exception, the marchioness was dignified and self-possessed. It was not until calmer moments that the conviction of Lady Blankisle's deception and manœuvres was stamped indelibly on his mind. For the present, all was a frightful chaos; and he only sought to hurry from a spot where it seemed truth, hope, and happiness, had ceased to dwell.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOTHER'S FALSEHOOD.

" What heavenly vesture of unspotted white ;
What beauty, grace, and power resistless clothe
The word of truth ; 'tis like the mirror which
Reflects with perfect, pure simplicity ;
Neither distorting, nor enlarging, nor
Diminishing ; but shewing all things as
They are in fact ; and, like the mirror, too,
If broken once, the charm 's for ever lost."

A. BIRD.

IT was our intention to cast a veil over the interview between Lady Blankisle and her daughter, and leave it to the reader's imagination.

There is something so frightful in a deviation from truth, something so revolting, so ungenerous in the deception of the parent towards a child who implicitly believes, that

we would fain have been spared the task of filling up the canvass, but we feel that the developement of Lady Helen's character requires that the scene should be painted.

"So, Lady Helen, you have forgotten the duty you owe to your parents," said Lady Blankisle to her daughter, with a severity of tone and depth of emotion which she rarely betrayed.

"Mamma! my dear mamma! how have I offended? how could I offend parents so indulgent and affectionate?" and, twining her arms round her mother's neck, she kissed her cheek.

"My dear, infatuated child," said Lady Blankisle, touched by this innocent appeal, "you have rashly pledged your faith, and confessed that you love Mr. Melton de Mowbray."

"I have only confessed the truth," said Lady Helen, blushing while she answered to the accusation, but not with the feelings of a guilty conscience; "is it in this that I have offended? in this have I acted rashly?"

"You have, you have; I, your mother,

should have been consulted first : it was base and dishonourable in him to win your promise."

" My mother, my dearest mother ! reproach me, if you will ; but link not the word dishonour with De Mowbray. He looked for your approval ; he is generous, noble, and open. It was but yesterday. Has he not spoken this morning ? has he not asked your blessing but now ?"

" He has spoken, but only to prove how much I have been deceived ; and had you waited for my consent, all might have been well."

" Tell me, I beseech you, tell me the meaning of your words. If I have erred, forgive your Helen ; this harshness kills me." And once more Lady Helen embraced her mother, and wept upon her neck.

" My child," said the marchioness, releasing herself from her daughter's arms ; " you, too, have been deceived."

" Not by Melton de Mowbray," exclaimed Lady Helen, with firmness and decision. " No, my dearest mother, I may have been

deceived in thinking that he had found favour in your sight ; I may have been deceived in thinking my dear father loved him as a son ; but for De Mowbray's truth I would stake my life. Say—tell me, I pray you, tell me, has he not honourably sought your ear ? has he not told you his noble, generous intentions to her who has no dower but the heart's affections ?”

“ Yes, Lady Helen !” said the marchioness, recalled to her purpose by this allusion, and speaking with the bitterness of wounded pride and disappointment ; “ yes, he has told me all, and declared he is a beggar !”

“ A beggar ! De Mowbray a beggar !” repeated Lady Helen bewildered alike by her mother's manner and words.

“ Yes, my love ; and now you see how rash, how criminal you have been, in presuming to answer for yourself. Sir John de Mowbray is ruined, and his son is a beggar !”

“ Poor, poor Melton ! His father, too !” and hiding her face in her handkerchief, Lady Helen indulged in a flood of tears, which neither the presence nor harshness of her

mother could restrain. “ And how has he acted ? ” she asked with earnestness, and suddenly checking the current of her woe, “ tell me, what has he said ? ”

“ He has declared the truth, and relinquished all claim to your hand.”

“ ’Twas nobly done, and like himself ! ” cried Helen, as her eyes sparkled through her tears with enthusiastic fervour ; “ but,” she added, as the flashes passed and left the eyes to their deep and melancholy darkness, “ but it is too late ; he may resign the hand, but cannot restore the heart.”

These words were spoken more in meditation than aloud ; but the quick ears of Lady Blankisle caught them up.

“ I trust,” she said, “ that Lady Helen Fawndove will behave with firmness, and feel the pride which becomes her station.”

“ In neither, dearest mamma, will your daughter be wanting : has he not asked to see me ? ”

“ He has done all that is necessary,” answered the marchioness, evading the question.

“ When does he leave us ? ”

“ This day.”

“ This hour, then, dearest mother, I must see him.”

“ Must ! ” echoed the marchioness, surprised and angered by such a headstrong word from the gentle Helen. “ Must ! ” she repeated ; “ Lady Helen has been rash, and now must be wise. It is impossible.”

“ Say not so, I pray you, dear, dear mamma ; recall that word ; I have promised, and may not fail. Trust to your daughter ; she ——”

“ Impossible ! ” repeated the marchioness, and interrupting Lady Helen. “ It is needless and impossible ; Mr. De Mowbray has resigned all pretensions.”

“ It cannot be, unless we meet—do not deny me, it cannot be.”

“ It is, my child ; and in this sad moment Mr. De Mowbray is the wiser of the two—he cannot wish to see you : I repeat but his words, when, through me, he tells you—‘ *you are free.*’ ”

Lady Helen looked at her mother’s face to

read her countenance, as if the sentence were written there : she looked in vain for any character of doubt—she suspected no forgery in the steady gaze; and, overcome by her feelings, her powers failed, and she sank back in her chair, senseless as the dead.

Till this hour the marchioness had never known her daughter ; hitherto her every opinion and will had bowed to hers, and of such intensity of feeling she had deemed her utterly incapable. Confounded and alarmed, she hurried to support her daughter's head, and, applying some salts, expected her immediate revival. She was, however, deceived ; and, more and more alarmed, rang the bell for further assistance. The windows were opened, Lady Helen laid upon a couch, and while the anxious mother loosened the ties which might impede the returning breath, she found the small embroidered case (already spoken of) pressed to a bosom, cold as if the heart's fountain had ceased for ever—as fair, as soft, yet senseless, as the satin which had veiled the stolen treasure.

Leaving Lady Helen to the care of others, the marchioness sought the marquess ; the obe-

dient husband was quickly tutored, and, as the reader knows, the interview was prevented. The discovery which had resulted from the fainting redoubled the fears of the manœuvrer ; she suspected, more strongly than ever, that the plea of meeting was for the purpose of renewing their pledge, in some form or other : her alarms overpowered her reason, and she forgot that De Mowbray might, had such been his selfish and dishonourable views, have exacted any promise from the daughter ere he revealed the truth to the mother. The scene in the marquess's study was soon ended, and the marchioness hastened back to Lady Helen's apartments.

“ Quick ! quick ! Annette, I am quite well now—my shawl and bonnet !” were the words of Lady Helen, which struck Lady Blankisle's ears as she was about to enter into her bedroom.

“ Lady Helen ! my dear—Annette, leave the room—my child, I rejoice to see you are recovered ; but what mean these preparations ? ”

“ I am about to fulfil the promise I gave this morning.”

“ It must not be, my love! your spirits are flurried, your mind unnerved, you are weak and ill,—sit with me, and struggle for composure.”

“ Never, my dearest mother, have I deceived you—never, from infancy till now, have I said you false; trust me when I tell you, if you wish me to be free you will not oppose my intentions.”

“ You know not what you say, nor what you ask—this is the fantasy of childhood, the weakness of romance; you have been rash for once, but shall not commit yourself again—Lady Helen Fawndove must not marry a beggar.”

“ Oh! spare me these words; you wrong me, dearest mamma, indeed you do; confiding in your approval, for once I may have acted rashly in confessing the truth; but let me redeem the promise of this morning. Is poverty the pest? must the unfortunate be shunned, as if smitten by contagion? No, no! My mother, once more I must see De Mowbray, and you shall find that firmness and candour can unite with kindness and compassion.”

“ Do you brave my wishes!” exclaimed the

marchioness, seizing her daughter's hand as she was about to pass to the door; “I command you, Lady Helen, to forego your purpose—it is too late—he whom you so unblushingly seek has declared you free, and at my hand has received the token which you have worn in secret.”

Lady Helen's hand was instinctively raised to her bosom—the lovely casket, senseless but now, throbbed with the pulse of life; but alas! its treasure had been stolen.

“My mother,” said Lady Helen, as soon as she could speak, “this is cruel, ungenerous, and—” she was on the point of adding, “false;” but, sinking at her mother's feet, she seized her hand, and, with the rushing tide of passionate feeling, she checked the word, and said, “No—no—you, my own blessed and honoured mother—you could not, would not, deceive your child—you who joined my hands, and taught me to pray to the God of truth—you, to whose words of wisdom, council, and love, I have listened as to an oracle, you could not have deceived me: fears and affection may have led you to be harsh—to rob me of the treasure conferred but yesterday; but tell me not that De

Mowbray sought it—received it—at any hand but mine."

" My child, he did ; from my hand he received it, and to my ears he declared you were free," answered the marchioness with evasive firmness.

" And is it too late?—has he really left without a wish to meet, to say one kind word at parting ?" asked Lady Helen, with a look of innocence and sorrow which none but a heartless manœuvrer could have withstood.

" It is too late. Mr. De Mowbray has bidden adieu to your father, myself, and this roof, for ever."

Lady Helen asked no more ; but, rising from the position she had still retained, she threw her arms round her mother's neck, and, as she convulsively strained her to her bosom, she implored to be forgiven.

" I have been rash for once," she said, " but I thought not to conceal or disobey : for a few short hours I have treasured a secret—the dream of happiness which to-day I had hoped to share with my beloved parents. Think me not weak ; fear not for the future ;"—and, after

a momentary burst of grief, she continued—“the past shall occur no more—it cannot be; leave me to myself for a time, and you shall see that your daughter is not wanting in the pride which becomes her sex and name: she will be resigned, if sad—firm, if forsaken; leave me, dearest maimma, till my mind shall strengthen my steps, and nerve me for the trial which has been, and must be.”

Lady Blankisle hesitated no longer. For more reasons than one she had feared to leave her daughter to herself; but there was a decision and dignity in the manner of asking to be left, which awed the intentions of the marchioness. She watched her to the couch, on which she calmly reclined, and with a passing smile repeated her request to be left alone.

“She might have been trusted,” said the marchioness to herself, as she passed through an outer room; “it might, too, have been better,” she added, as she paused at the threshold. “It is not too late; it were better they had met—shall I consent?—confess that I——No, this cannot be; my words have

rendered this impossible—it is too late.” And the marchioness, conscious of the deception she had practised, shrank from the humbling confession; and, ordering that no one should disturb Lady Helen Fawndove’s repose, she retired to the marquess’s study to listen for a departure which she had figuratively anticipated.

The windows of the study commanded a view of the road leading to the stables; these were at some distance from the house, and, ere long, Lady Blankisle had the happiness of seeing Mr. De Mowbray booted and spurred, and, as if impatient of delay, hastening towards the stable. It were difficult to describe the anxious delight with which she watched his retiring steps. The guilty listening to the evidence they fear; the coward looking on departing danger; may, if their feelings were united, image those of the manœuvrers. In her eyes, Melton de Mowbray, poverty-struck and ruined, was, in fact, like one smitten by the plague—a thing to be banished and avoided.

“ Thank Heaven he is gone!” she said within her heart, as, after a short interval, she heard the sound of a horse in full gallop, yet wished the next moment that to-day had been as free from frost as yesterday. The clanging horse-shoes rang upon the hardened road.

“ What is that?” exclaimed Lady Helen, starting from her couch, and listening to the sound. “ It is, it must be De Mowbray’s Arab; it is, it must be Tedmora’s springy bound!” and she flew from window to window to listen to the well-known sound, and confirm the thought by catching sight of the horseman. The sound ceased, the windings of the road were unseen from her windows. “ Was it fancy?” she asked, so suddenly had the sound died away. Still, however, she listened, still she gazed upon the sweeping downs which rose in the distance. “ ’Tis he! ’tis Melton!—he had not left us!” she cried in agony, as her eyes caught sight of the flying Arab, and saw De Mowbray bending to the loosened rein. Once he turned round, and Lady Helen fancied he might have seen her at the window; the

next moment the bounding steed darted forward as if the spur had urged it to unearthly speed. A moment more, and it skirted the brow of the hill and assumed a preternatural size, seeming as if it cleaved the broad expanse of heaven, rather than moving like a thing of earth. Again another bound, and it sank at once from sight. “ My brain, my tortured brain ! ” cried Lady Helen, as she pressed her hands to her throbbing head : “ can this be madness ? do my ears deceive—my vision fail ? This dizziness, this darkness creeping o’er my senses ; oh ! spare me this, Almighty Providence, and aid me to know the truth ! ”

With the united efforts of mind and body, Lady Helen rallied all remaining power and hastened to the library, where she had promised to meet De Mowbray. She scarcely knew why she sought this spot as the means of confirming the evidence of her senses. She could not, however, have decided better : Lady Blankisle entered from the study at the same moment ; the distracted daughter flew to her arms.

"Tell me, I implore you, have I not seen him? has he not left us but now?" she said, fixing her eyes upon the marchioness.

Lady Blankisle was at a loss for an answer.

"Come in, my dear child," she said, leading Lady Helen into the study; "you told me you were calm, I fear you are faint again."

"No, no, it is not thus my senses fail; but answer me—tell me, I am not mad—have I not seen him—this moment seen him?"

The marchioness was silent, but the shame of the guilty fell upon her face; she shrank from her daughter's gaze, which read the involuntary confession of falsehood. It was a moment of bitter agony to Lady Helen; she felt that she was inflicting punishment upon her who had borne her to existence. Turning her eyes away, they fell upon the relics of the embroidered case; of the lock of hair which De Mowbray had presented, and which, half consumed, lay amidst the embers of the hearth.

"I have wronged him, my mother!" she said, in a deep, but steady voice; and, point-

ing to the blackened relic, “ he promised to receive it from no hand but this, and his words have not been false.”

Lady Helen retired to her room ; nothing more was said or asked : no explanations could do away the conviction of that painful hour. In outward manner, the respect due from a child to a mother was ever continued, but thenceforth the sacred and unbounded confidence in a mother’s word had ceased for ever.

CHAPTER V.

**TEDMORA, THE BEAUTIFUL ARABIAN, AND A
NIGHT IN THE MAIL COACH.**

“ C'est une chose incroyable que la mobilité et la transparence de la physionomie de ces chevaux, quand on n'en a pas été témoin. Toutes leurs pensées se peignent dans leurs yeux et dans le mouvement convulsif de leurs joues, de leurs lèvres, de leurs naseaux, avec autant d'évidence, avec autant de caractère et de mobilité que les impressions de l'âme sur le visage d'un enfant. Nous n'avons nousmêmes aucune idée du degré d'intelligence et d'attachement auxquels l'habitude de vivre avec la famille ; d'être caressé par les enfans, nourri par les femmes, reprimandé ou encouragé par la voix du maître, peuvent élever l'instinct du cheval.”—*Voyage en Orient, par Lamartine.*

Who but a madman would not be conservative? Who, indeed, we ask, when we see the pest of civilised improvement, and think that we should have lived to be fined one pound one for leaping a ditch on the downs of Dorset! — have lived to behold the glorious sweeping

hills of velvet, docked, hedged, and ditched, like a cockney's garden? Horrible! most horrible! Blessed happy Arab of the desert, whose burning sands can never be enclosed — whose condition can never be improved! Fly with us, ye unhappy and accursed ultras! lead us to the sand where nothing takes root, and radicals would perish for want of work! Freight us, ye company of steamers, with coals from Newcastle, and aid us to paddle from this miserable island to Arabia Felix!

Such was our prayer, when a shepherd left his flocks to turn informer, or reformer; and when, rather than suffer imprisonment, we paid the antiquated coinage of a guinea for crossing a spot which, from the days of the creation, had been as free as the winds of heaven.

Our hero lived in happier times — happier, at least, as far as the downs were concerned; as to man, reform itself cannot change the human heart; man was, and ever will be, a thing of passions, hopes, and fears, alternately blessed and wretched in this world of trial.

Yes, in De Mowbray's time, it were pos-

sible to gallop from morn to night without let or hindrance; and a blessed privilege it was: to bound free and unshackled on the face of earth is a glorious sensation; our spirits, feelings, life itself, seems to expand and gain a new existence; we are like a prisoner unfettered and at liberty, buoyant as the lark escaping from its cage and soaring in the sunny skies. Thus it is, and more than thus, to the joyous heart; and to the heart wounded, bleeding, or unhappy, it is, for the time, an escape from the torture of despair.

As Melton de Mowbray flew on his Arab towards the town of Dorchester, he felt as if he were escaping from himself, and as he clavé the rushing wind, it seemed as if the dew of night were falling on his fevered brow. Without turning to the right or left, he descended or rose like a bark upon the billows, and soon, alas! too soon, arrived at the goal, which, unlike the haven that welcomes the mariner to home and happiness, was to witness the renewal of his sufferings.

The sight of the town, and those signs of population which rise like offsets round a city,

recalled him to the scenes which he had left behind and those which were opening to his future career. Reining in his beautiful pet, he stopped about a mile short of the town, and, for the first time, looked for his faithful groom, already introduced to the reader in St. James's Street. Mr. Brown, however, was not to be seen ; and, as Mowbray saw the heaving flank of Tedmora, and the transparent red of her spreading nostrils, he reproached himself for the speed to which he had urged the willing brute. “ Selfish that I was,” he said, as having slackened the girths he threw one arm over her shoulders and met the full, intelligent eyes which were turned upon him — “ forgive me, my poor Tedmora ; never, never more shall we speed together, and never more will your gentleness be tried as yesterday ! ” And, as he conjured up the graceful image of Lady Helen on his Arab, guiding its steps with a touch so light, that it seemed as if her wishes, rather than her hand, were felt — as he thought of the stranger profaning the seat which had thus been graced, he conceived for a moment the more selfish determina-

tion of shooting the noble animal on which he leant. It was but a moment; again he met the fond expression of the dark and speaking eye; again the poor brute pressed its head against its master's arm, and looked with confiding affection for its wonted caresses. “Perish the selfish thought!” he exclaimed, as he felt the passing resolution die away; “another may cherish you, love you as I have done: yes, poor brute, you may still be happy, and I may be forgotten!” and, shrouding his face amidst the silkened mane, he kissed the faithful slave which poverty compelled him to sell unto another. And if it be a crime to pray for the animal which loves us, serves us with more than man's fidelity, De Mowbray was a criminal; for he prayed that his Arab might find a mistress as kind, as gentle, as the being it carried but yesterday.

The sound of a horseman, at full speed, interrupted this prayer. “One more kiss, Tedmora, and we part for ever! Now for the world, and may it steel me to its heartless self!”

"How is this, Brown? I have been waiting this half hour, and you knew I was hurried."

"Lord bless you, sir!" answered Mr. Brown, dismounting to relieve his panting horse, wiping the sweat from his brow, and speaking with that familiarity which is allowed to one who has known the young master from his cradle. "Hurried, sir! but you did not tell me you were mad."

"Mad!" repeated Mowbray, his eyes flashing fire for the instant. "You forget, Brown," he continued calmly but sternly, "I am no longer the boy you taught to ride, and now must command the respect due to a master from his servant."

Brown sank beneath the reproof, and was so electrified by the unusual severity of manner, that he could only stammer his pardon and sorrow for offending.

"Never mind, Brown," said Mowbray, appeased as rapidly as his anger had arisen. "I forgot your horse was slow, and, I believe, my pace was of the wildest."

"Slow, sir!" said Brown as he passed his hand from his horse's shoulder to the fet-

lock, and wiped off a shower of foam ; “ not so very slow ; Black Bob would take the lead of ere a horse in Squire Noble’s stud : but if Will Brown hadn’t taught your honour, you and Tedmor had never stuck together. It warn’t riding unless the devil — that is, it warn’t a Christian’s pace, asking your pardon, sir.”

“ Well, well, Brown, say no more, you are forgiven ; may you find a kinder master. Give me my greatcoat and the little valise.”

“ What, sir ! ” exclaimed Brown, opening his eyes in wonderment.

“ Unbuckle my coat, and unstrap the leather case from your saddle ; now, do you understand ? ”

“ What does your honour mean ? ” again inquired the old groom, completely at fault.

“ What I say, Brown. Come, be quick, or I shall lose the mail.”

“ We shan’t be long riding into town, sir.”

“ I intend to walk in ; you must return with the horses to Blankisle Hall.”

“ What, sir ! walk with a greatcoat and

portmantel on your arm? No, your honour, that can't be any how; indeed, sir, Will Brown can't allow of that."

"Obey me this instant—I shall be late," said Mowbray, with angry impatience.

The servant set to work to unstrap the valise and unbuckle the band which passed round his waist and confined his master's greatcoat. As he presented the two, he ventured another effort and humbly implored that his master would enter the town "like a *gentleman*, as he was."

"Brown, you are faithful, and your heart is kind," said Mowbray, somewhat unmanned by his servant's respectful appeal; "but we must part. If I am still a gentleman, it is one without the means of rewarding services like yours. Misfortunes have befallen my poor father and I—we both are beggared; my horses must be sold, and you, Brown, must leave me."

"Leave you! seek another service! no, sir—never while I lives!" cried the old servant thrown off his guard, forgetting the

respect due to his master's words by an oath which came to the tip of his tongue, and all but forgetting the deeper reverence due to his Master in Heaven.

“ Brown, it must be ; you forget.”

“ Forget, your honour !” said Brown interrupting his master, while a tear stole down his weather-beaten face : “ no, sir, I don't forget. Can I forget how you've rode upon my arms, and used to sit like a kitten on the back of old General ? and who but me has ever followed you since your legs were long enough to cross a saddle ? No, sir, I don't forget ; but old Brown can't leave you in distress.”

“ It must be so, I fear it must,” said Mowbray, wavering in his purpose : “ for the present, at least, it must. You are kind to the poor brutes, and, until they are sold, to you alone I trust them.”

“ Poor things !” said Brown, looking first at the Arab and then at his own black steed : “ poor brutes ! next to your honour, I do love *um* as my children. And that, too,” pointing

to Tedmora, “ you couldn’t have the heart to sell her, sir ? ”

“ All, without exception.”

“ What ! after she has carried that dear, sweet lady, sir, the Lady Helen ? ”

“ It must be,” said Mowbray, turning aside to conceal his emotion.

“ Why, look — look your honour, if the poor brute does not ask you to mount ! ”

Mowbray heard the short neigh which had welcomed his approach a thousand times ; and, looking to his Arab, he saw that the impatient animal had repeated the lesson of yesterday, and lay, like the camel of the desert, to receive its rider.

“ Flesh and blood cannot stand it ! ” exclaimed Brown, as he went to Tedmora, and caressed the head which was turned back towards the saddle till it touched the mane. “ See ! your honour, she speaks ; she asks you to stay, sir, as I do ; and, by the blessed powers of truth, she is a baby like myself — she cries like a child.”

And Brown pointed to sundry bright drops

which still hung amidst the waving mane, and certainly bore the strongest possible resemblance to tears.

"Give me my coat," said Mowbray, snatching that and his valise from his groom's grasp, and struggling to overcome tears which were ready to fall, in sympathy, peradventure, to the gentle Arabian. "This will not do," he muttered to himself; "lie still, thou rebel heart! be steeled against the world. Brown!" he said aloud, firmly but kindly, "you have my orders; meet me in London, in the city, at the bank in Lombard Street."

Without waiting another instant, he hastened to Dorchester. Once, and only once, when close to the town, and concealed by a tree, he looked back. There were the horses on the same spot; the Arab had arisen, and, with outstretched neck, seemed as if intent upon her master's steps; while Brown's head, shrouded by his two hands, was resting on the empty saddle.

As De Mowbray descended the clear, wholesome-looking street of Dorchester, he saw the mail-coach standing opposite its ap-

pointed inn. Having asked if there were room, and securing the “one inside” which remained, he sought the coffee-room until the horses were put to.

“This way, sir; better be quick, sir,” said an unctuous, bustling waiter, who was carrying a fat roast goose, redolent of sage and onions; “by your leave, sir,” jostling Mowbray with his elbow, and helping him to a stream of gravy which flowed down his coat, and left its foul stain upon the peerless boot-top.

“Confound your impertinence and clumsiness!” cried Mowbray, with a look which might have knocked a coward down.

“Beg pardon, sir,” cried the waiter, unabashed; “better walk in, sir; don’t stop till they comes to London; beautiful bird; find the inside, sir, better than the out.”

De Mowbray thought otherwise, and continued his retreat to the open air; though his whip had been half raised to punish the wink and smile which had accompanied the waiter’s jest.

The world in which we live is something

like the spheres which compose a Chinese ball ; there are worlds within worlds, distinct, though emanating from what was originally equal and entire. There is the great world and the little world, with a host of intermediate worlds. Up to this period De Mowbray was a child untutored, and ignorant of all but the world of fashion—that great, that polished, hollow sphere, on which the proud, the rich, the titled move. He was now about to descend in the scale ; and received his first lessons from a saucy waiter, and a goose swimming in gravy. A wiser—that is, a more experienced traveller—would have pocketed, or, still more probably, avoided the offence, and followed the waiter's good advice. Our hero, however, was sick at heart ; and though he so far profited by the hint as to buy some biscuits or light provision for his journey, he turned with disgust from the smell of savoury dishes, and the sight of gross and hearty feeders.

The bow and respect paid to those who pay the reckoning of an inn, were, of course,

unoffered to the stylish moustached great young man, who could live without eating; nay, the little *valise* had been tumbled into the seat without aid of the porter: there were no claims upon — the gentleman.

“ What did he give you, Tom ? ” said the porter to the waiter, who, having hustled through his office, had come for a mouthful of fresh air, and was wiping his greasy face with his greasier napkin.

“ Give me ! not half so much as I gived he ; I helped him to gravy, and charged him nothing ! ” nudging his fellow-servant, and pointing to the damaged boot-top with a flick of his napkin.

“ Some poor officer, I takes it, Tom.”

“ Yes, on half-pay.”

“ No pay at all, for we neither of us arn’t seen the colour of his money ! ” said the porter, with a horse laugh.

“ Insolent scoundrels ! is poverty already written in my looks ? ” muttered Mowbray between his teeth, as he partly overheard this little critique.

"Now, gentlemen, time's up!" said the guard, as he bundled his living charge into the mail.

Opposite to Mowbray was a female in deep mourning, ladylike in appearance, and, as far as a long black veil could allow of an opinion, handsome in features. Mowbray's right was occupied by a fat, jolly farmer, who mixed legs with a thin, pale, shrewd-looking man, with a blue bag, secured by a turn round his arm—one Mr. Lamb, a wise man from the west, with law at his fingers' ends.

"You have taken my seat, Mr. Wurzel; I always sit with my back to the horses," said the Lamb to the farmer.

"Sorry for it, for there is mighty little room in my lap, though you be but a Lamb," said the farmer, looking with a gracious smile on the full curve of his waistcoat.

"But, Mr. Wurzel, I put my coat there."

"But, Mr. Lamb, I put myself there; and that, I think, weighs most. Possession, you know, better than me, is the main point; so, make yourself easy."

The lawyer looked as if he longed to

commence an action of ejectment, but the iron frame of his antagonist offered no chance of success ; so he submitted to the verdict with the best possible grace.

“ Madam,” said De Mowbray, addressing the lady, “ allow me to offer the seat I have taken ; I was not aware that it possessed any advantage.”

“ I thank you greatly,” answered the lady, still keeping her seat.

“ Better take it, ma’am,” said Mr. Wurzel ; “ no draughts with your back to the horses, and I would have done as much for *Mrs. Lamb*.”

The lady repeated her acknowledgments ; and, either to avoid the cold, or further offers, changed seats with De Mowbray, and settled into silence.

Mr. Wurzel, having a lady by his side, and three parts of the seat to himself, appeared particularly pleased, and only wanted some chatty neighbours to complete his happiness ; there was, however, a difficulty in attaining this. Mr. Lamb had not forgiven the loss of his seat, and there was a something in the

the manner of his other companions which awed the wealthy farmer; nevertheless, he was determined to beat the bush, and try his luck.

"A very fine day, ma'am," said Mr. Wurzel, addressing the lady in deep mourning. A slight and silent inclination of the head was the only reply.

"Don't feel the wind on this side, ma'am?"

Another inclination.

"Might as well talk to a hearse," said the farmer to himself. "Well, poor soul! it may be she has a load of trouble, but a little chat would have made it lighter. Let's try t'other corner."

"Find it cold, sir — a fine frosty air?" said Mr. Wurzel, addressing De Mowbray.

A slight bow acknowledged the remark.

"Umph!" said the farmer, aloud; and, to himself, "Mr. Tom Noddy, I suppose; the lady's son, perhaps: try again, I knows his face."

"This frost will stop the hunting, sir."

Another bow.

"You ride with Squire Noble's hounds?—

Often seen you lead the field ; have I not, sir ? ”

There was no resisting this direct appeal ; and, probably, there was a spice of flattery, which made it palatable ; it was a point on which a man’s *amour propre* is most susceptible. De Mowbray acknowledged that he had often hunted with the hounds in question.

“ Didn’t see you yesterday, sir,” said the farmer, pursuing his advantage ; “ you warn’t in the field, was you, sir ? ”

“ No.”

“ Lord love you, sir, you should have been there ! never seed such a run in all my life. Throwed the hounds into the Blankisle covers ; unkennelled a fox as strong as a wolf ; set his head right for the hills ; down to Yardly bottoms ; smack through the village ; hounds raced him for the last three miles, and killed without a check : a thousand pities you wasn’t there, sir, you’d never have forgotten the day ! ”

“ Very possible : did you win the brush ? ”

“ No, but I was within one ; and I’d have been first, if I’d had your black gelding. A

noble brute! pity you don't ride it, sir, yourself: I wouldn't grudge a cool hundred or so, if you'd like to sell him."

"I am no horse-dealer," replied De Mowbray, with offended pride, and forgetting that he was on the point of selling every horse he had.

"Beg pardon, sir; no offence I hopes, for I didn't mean it," said the honest, hearty yeoman.

"None, my good friend," answered De Mowbray, making an effort to humble himself to his circumstances.

"Glad of that; but I had a reckoning with that there fox: I live t'other side of my lord's covers, and the rascal has stolen at least a dozen geese. By the by, sir, that was a lovely bird we had for dinner; pity you didn't eat some."

"I was not hungry at the time."

"That's a pity, too, for I saw that saucy Tom give you a taste of the gravy: excuse my laughing, sir, but I know the chap."

"It was probably my fault for standing in his way."

"May be so; but I can give you a capital

receipt, stuff that will take the grease from your boot in a jiffey, if you'd like to use it."

" My good sir, I am not in the habit of cleaning my own boots," said De Mowbray; and, thinking he had been schooled enough for the present, he took a book out of his pocket and read, or made pretence to that effect.

" Noddy's offended," said the farmer, with a chuckle to himself; " let's try the lawyer on his own beat."

" Good assizes, Mr. Lamb?"

" Pretty middling, Mr. Wurzel."

" They tell me you had all the best causes, sir."

" Messrs. Lamb, Fox, and Co. generally have their share," answered the attorney, with becoming modesty.

" I take it the poor barristers must look to you for their bread; eh, Mr. Lamb, isn't it so?"

" Our patronage is certainly great, Mr. Wurzel."

" And my neighbour, Mrs. Herring, silly woman! have you picked her bones?"

" You mean the great watercourse cause,
Herring versus Stone?"

" The same, sir ; not over yet ?"

" Oh, no ! nothing like it, we expect a new trial ; and, as one witness against us is upwards of a hundred, another ninety-eight, and the winter promises to be severe, a gracious Providence will, probably, remove them, and we shall succeed."

Watercourse causes are, like the never-failing stream, interminable ; we, however, who are fond of change, shall only say that the floods, fields, dikes, wears, levels—and last, not least, the flats who went to law—afforded Messrs. Wurzel and Lamb a theme till night-fall with little intermission. As they passed Weyhill, the lawyer was polite enough to ask the farmer the price of wools, and expressed a hope that his sheep sold well.

" Pretty middling, Mr. Lamb, as you say ; but you attorneys make more of your sheep than we farmers."

" How so, Mr. Wurzel ?"

" Why, you first live upon their carcase, fleece them next, and turn their skins to good

account at last ; that's more than we can do—so, good night." And, with a merry laugh, the farmer pulled from his pocket the toilet of sleep ; the lawyer opened his blue bag, and did the same.

They who neither travel in stages, nor have seen the inimitable Mathews transformed into an old woman, have little idea of the ludicrous figures which grace the night coaches. The red, bluff, coarse features of Mr. Wurzel, surmounted by a Welsh wig, white night-cap, and silk handkerchief tied under his chin, was no bad specimen. The thin, pale-faced Mr. Lamb, garnished with all the minutiae of his wife's providential care, was a capital pendant ; and at any other time would, doubtless, have amused the all-observant De Mowbray : as it was, he only blessed the night, and rejoiced when the talkers uttered nothing but an occasional snore : he threw himself back in the corner and closed his eyes, but not to sleep.

Bitter, agonising were the reflections of that midnight hour ; like the spectre which some have imagined to see at stated times, so did

the voice of Lady Helen Fawndove revisit his ear: still, as in his dreams of the preceding night, he heard her implore and say, “Save me! hear me! ere we part.” Then the thousand things which had been left unsaid, unasked, and unanswered, arose to mind, and with them, the certainty of meeting no more. “My poor deserted Helen!” he said, as he thought of her severer trial—the sad duty of endurance, which falls to woman’s lot; “yet who escapes?” he asked himself, as he watched the dark figure which was now partially revealed by the rising moon. The rays of light which fell from time to time upon her face, appeared to rouse the mourner; for the first time she raised her veil, and, as if encouraged by the dead silence of her companions, she leant forward and gazed upon the moon. Her features were exquisitely beautiful—marked, though delicate; her full blue eyes, with singularly dark eyebrows, and relieved by the widow’s weeds, looked pure and holy as the heavens they seemed to contemplate. Grief, deep and undermining, sat upon her cheek,—the roses, the freshness of youth, had perished

for ever ; and yet, as her lips moved in silent prayer, there seemed to be the most perfect resignation. An involuntary sigh escaped from De Mowbray's heart. The stranger, startled by the sound, once more sank her veil, and covering her eyes with her hands, continued motionless as death.

“ Mine is but the lot of all,” thought De Mowbray, whose attention had been riveted by the being before him ; “ how many a throbbing brain has beat where mine does now—where yonder mourner rests her pensive cheek ! Oh ! if this senseless cloth could speak its evidence, what varied tales of misery and hope might be revealed ! And shall I, with youth and health, be less resigned than the calm, yet dying mourner before me ? Is not the world, like the coach in which we travel, freighted by turns with joy and sorrow ? Is not the bridal chamber of to-day changed with the morrow to the bed of death—and changed and changed again ? Am I not hastening to a father’s blessing ? Has not his heart been touched ? May not duty and toil be sweeter than the bed of idleness ? Will not Helen approve ? Will not this reward me,

and need I quite despair? Alas! alas!"—But here the buoyant elasticity of spirits, with which the young can reason and struggle, was interrupted by a something between a grunt and a sigh from Mr. Wurzel.

"Can't breathe—half choked—bad as a court of law," he said; and down went the glass on his right.

The clattering of the window awoke the lawyer. He shrank from the cold blast; but, without speaking, turned up the collar of his coat, lifted the red worsted net (Mrs. Lamb's performance) to his eyes, and only left the advanced tip of his nostrils to inhale the breath of life. The farmer was soon asleep, when a hand was stealthily advanced, and the glass was slowly raised half way—a hitch of some minutes—and then the same hand completed the ascent. The farmer, heated by a hearty dinner, and three or four stiff glasses of brandy and water, was again in need of air.

"Hands off! you'll throttle me!" he cried, starting from his dreams, and loosening his neckcloth with one hand, while he lowered the

glass with the other. The lawyer was still as death ; and the farmer, refreshed by the air, once more fell off to sleep. In due time, and with due caution, Mr. Lamb repeated his former manœuvre, and with the same result of suffocation.

"We'll soon settle this point," said Mr. Wurzel, awaking for the third time, and raising his huge elbow, he poked it through the glass. "There, Mr. Lamb, put that up again if you can."

"Assault and battery!" cried the lawyer, finding his voice at last ; "you must pay for that."

"Six and eightpence will do that, Mr. Lamb—a small bill, too, for beating a lawyer."

"We shall all be frozen," said Mr. Lamb in despair ; "and you forget the lady."

"Very sorry, ma'am, for that ; but can't live without air," said Mr. Wurzel, turning round to apologise ; when seeing that the lady was apparently asleep, he wished Mr. Lamb a "good night's rest," and did not awake again until morning.

“A bad case!” said Mr. Lamb between his chattering teeth, as he surveyed the awful smash ; and pulling his nightcap over his face, like a man about to be hung, he suffered the extreme penalty of a cold and killing wind.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER AND SON.

“ Their hearts were full,
And overflowed in prayer to Him who gave
Such sense of happiness amidst their woe.
And first the elder rose, and gave his all—
A father’s blessing.”

A. BIRD.

PERSONS who travel in their own carriages, and at their own hours, know not the horrors of arriving by the London mail in a cold, dark winter’s morning: in its way, there are few things more wretched.

The dim flickering lamps struggle with the yellow fog, and track the way through the silent, dirty streets. A thick, blackened candle, reveals the yawning book-keeper in his office; and the torpid porters, still heavy with sleep, look as lively as the fog they breathe: the guard’s horn, and rattling wheels of his

majesty's coach, put something like life into the scene. The door leading to the coffee-room is opened by the unwashed "Boots;" and a half-dressed, shivering waiter stands prepared to welcome the guests who want a bed—or breakfast—when they can get it.

"Would you please to walk in, sir—do you want a room?" said the waiter to De Mowbray, as he stood with his valise in his hand.

"I want a hackney coach," was the answer.

"Get the gentleman a coach," said the waiter, with an air of authority, to the mercurial Boots.

"There be'ent ne'er a one on the stand."

"Then find one, or wait till there is;—better walk into the coffee-room, sir," said the waiter, addressing the latter part of his speech to De Mowbray, and leading the way.

There appeared no alternative; and, by the aid of some dimly burning candles, he was able to survey the scene: it was new to him, and may be so to many a fair reader. In the grate were the blackened remains of an extinct fire; the deserted tables bore witness to the business of yesterday: on some were newspapers, spotted

with transparent grease, or soiled with fingers, tea, and coffee; on others were seen the signs of dinner, supper, or the “traveller’s night-cap.” Amidst nutshells, or the *débris* of food, were empty tumblers sticking to the stained and dark mahogany. The old and new world, with worlds unknown, were mapped in slops of grog; and mountains of snow were marked by tallow, which had guttered from the candlesticks. Slices of lemon, saved from drowning, with large white vulgar toothpicks, were strewed around. At the end furthest from the fire-place were three pieces of furniture, which Goldsmith describes as

“A chest of drawers by day--a bed by night,”

in two of which two weary waiters were snoring; while the third, still in its nocturnal character, but empty, displayed sheets which matched the London fog. We pass all other details, and leave the reader to imagine the united stifled atmosphere of a diningroom, a drinkingroom, and bedroom, with no ventilation save that of a cold chimney, rising in the dense air of smoke and soot.

It may be supposed that our hero waited with impatience for the crazy vehicle which was to transport him to Grosvenor Square ; but while he endured the contrast between the impurities around and the luxuries of Blankisle Hall, with its pure elastic air, he felt also for the poor widow whom he had left in the coach. No one had welcomed her arrival ; she seemed alone in the world, yet refused all offers of assistance,—and, as if shrinking as long as might be from contact with the busy herd, she had thanked De Mowbray with the gentleness of the perfect lady, yet declined his offers, saying, “she thought she should accompany the coach till it stopped.”

“Boots” interrupted these reflections by announcing a coach, that had drawn up in the rear of the mail which was about to proceed to the city. There was still the solitary mourner as she had remained the livelong night, and De Mowbray’s heart bled for one unknown, excepting by the tie of fellow-suffering ; so true it is that misfortune makes us feel for others, as poverty awakens the heart to the calls of charity.

“ Is there nothing, madam, I can do? no message I can leave with the porter?” said De Mowbray, while he raised his hat with every token of respect, and once more addressed the stranger.

“ None — nothing — I am alone; but, indeed, I thank you, and feel this kindness doubly from one whom the world deems cold and heartless.”

“ Madam, have I the honour — ”

“ We have met before; but I find that Mr. De Mowbray has been wronged, and I hope he will believe me grateful, though my thoughts are — ”

Ere the sentence was finished, or De Mowbray could recover his surprise at hearing himself addressed by name, the mail drove off, and the porter called his attention to the hackney which awaited himself and *valise*.

“ To Grosvenor Square,” was the order, and the crazy vehicle rattled slowly on its course.

“ Who can she be?” asked De Mowbray of himself, as his thoughts were still occupied by the picture of the lonely stranger; and

while the last expression of her beautiful features recurred, he almost fancied it was the face of one who, but two years since, had been the beauty of the season. “It must be so,” he said, as he traced the circumstances which might have led to such result, and remembered how she had disappeared like a star which suddenly passes from the sphere it adorned. “Yes, she loved, and married one whom Lady Blankisle would have styled—a beggar: she was scorned by her offended parents, deserted by those who had profaned the name of friend; and now, perhaps, unforgiven, unknown, and widowed, she has to struggle with sickness and sorrow.”

As these possibilities flashed across his mind, he reproached himself for having allowed the mail to start without offering assistance more substantial than the mere courtesy of good breeding: then, again, his own destitution arose to mind, and with it, the thoughts of Lady Helen, who, had her fate been united to his, might have been reduced to similar trials. This, at least, she

had been spared, and he thanked Heaven that the curse of poverty was on him alone ; and, taught by the example of a meek and gentle woman, he kissed the rod, and prayed that he might suffer, and submit with the strength of man.

While these prayers and meditations were passing, the daylight broke ; that is to say, darkness became sufficiently visible to warrant the belief that the sun had risen somewhere, though its light and life were shrouded by the London atmosphere.

“ There is a bright side to every thing,” says some sage or other, and the coachman contrived to make darkness a capital shield for ignorance.

“ *Vitch* is the house, your honour ? there’s no seeing the numbers,” said Jarvie, as he pulled up his coach, hitched up one of the front windows, and let it down himself.

“ Yonder ! the large house with the portico and veranda.”

“ *That ere vun?*” asked the stupid driver, pointing to the wrong house.

“ No — no — the fifth from this.”

“ *Vitch?*” asked the man, attempting in vain to count so far.

“ Five from this — drive on !”

“ Is that it, your honour, with the large papers pasted in the *windows*? ”

“ Yes — yes — you are right now,” said De Mowbray, faintly, as his eyes glanced on the notice of “ This House and Furniture to be Sold.”

“ My poor father !” he exclaimed, as he thought of all that his taste and wealth had collected, and which now was about to be scattered by the fiat of a salesman’s hammer.

“ Shall I knock, your honour ? ” asked the coachee, in doubt how the announcement was to be made.

“ No — no — you may disturb the family : let me out.”

The man obeyed, but, as he let down his jingling step, said, with a knowing look, “ that he didn’t think there was much of a family there.”

Without heeding this surmise, De Mow-

bray sprang from the coach, and, hastening to the door, was, from habit, on the point of forgetting the caution he had given ; the fear, however, of disturbing his father recurred in time, and, relinquishing the knocker, he rang the area-bell. There was no reply : again he rang, but with no better success. He then ventured on a single knock, and, as the sound echoed through the silent hall, he felt like the humbled beggar who doubts the welcome he may receive on the property of the rich ; nay, as his eye involuntarily fixed on the grim and staring head of the lion which held in its mouth the ponderous knocker, it seemed to frown upon the bold intrusion.

“ Can the house be empty ? is it actually sold to another ? ” he asked himself, and was debating whether he should drive on to the city, when an old woman, whose voice arose from the area, asked

“ Who is there ? ”

Upon hearing De Mowbray’s name, she made what haste she could to the hall, and presently her feeble hands were heard with-

drawing the bolts and chains ; and, lastly, accompanied with mumbling imprecations, in turning the stiff lock of the door.

Heedless of the unpaid coachee, of the old woman whom he had almost knocked down in opening the door, De Mowbray rushed towards his father's bedroom. The single knock had been sufficient to arouse the sleeping baronet ; he had reckoned on the bare possibility of his son's arrival, and was prepared to receive him ; but, while he strained him to his bosom, kissed his forehead, and lavished the full tide of a parent's love, he said,—

“ My son, my son, this is more than I expected — more than I deserved ! ”

“ Indeed — indeed, my dear father, you have wronged my heart if you doubted my instant answer to your affection and appeal,” said Melton, struggling for utterance, while he returned the touching welcome of his father.

“ And am I forgiven, Melton ? can you pardon the dotage of a father, whose too con-

fiding trust has involved you in his ruin — can you?"

" My honoured, my beloved father," said Melton, sinking on his knee, while he kissed, with reverence and love, his father's hand, " speak not thus; rather forgive your son, who, till now, has disowned the holy tie which links us: be mine the forgiveness, and with it, my dearest father, your blessing."

" Bless thee — bless thee, my son!" cried the agitated father, as he raised De Mowbray, and again and again pressed him to his heart; " and blessed be the mercy of Heaven," he continued, with looks directed to the Almighty throne. " Me — I am not beggared — I am not poor! If the treasures of the world are lost, am I not rich? — blessed and enriched a thousandfold in the son whom I have found, in the love which I knew not till this moment?"

While the stern, the haughty, and unbending Sir John de Mowbray as a father — the distant, proud, and independent Melton de Mowbray as a son — were mutually awakened

to their true and better feelings—while poverty and misfortune united those whom fashion, wealth, and the world, had kept apart—while Nature resumed her right in the outpourings of filial and paternal love, all minor considerations were forgotten; amidst these, the miserable and unpaid vehicle which had brought them together, and its equally dirty-looking driver. Though the morning was rainy and cold, for some time the love of gain induced the man to stump the pavement in his wooden shoes, like a sentry at his post; then he halted, cursed the gnawing at his stomach; then flapped first one hand against his ribs, then the other, but all his efforts to resist the chilling air were ineffectual; till, at length, the evil spirit of gin prevailed over every other consideration, and, bent on a gill of the poor man's cheap poison, he rang the bell, and told the old woman to go and demand his fare.

A slight knock at the door of Sir John de Mowbray's dressing-room, recalled both father and son to “things of the earth, earthly.” There was little occasion to inquire who was there, since the old woman who had opened

the hall-door was the only servant to supply the place of the large and thorough establishment which was wont to be in attendance.

“What do you want?” asked the baronet, endeavouring to resume his usual dignified tone of voice.

“I beg pardon, Sir John,” said the old woman, “but the coachman says he’s a tired of waiting, and wants to be paid his fare.”

“The fellow must wait!” said Sir John, with something like irritation at what he termed an impertinent intrusion.

“The fault was mine, my dear father, and you must not be angry,” said Melton, attempting to soothe the parent, whose pride had not as yet learnt to bend to plebeian necessities. “It was thoughtless on my part,” he continued, “but I forgot all but the words which called me to your side.”

“Say no more my child, my all that is left on earth!” said Sir John, as he returned the pressure of De Mowbray’s hand: “bear with my temper awhile; the sapling may bow to the storm, but I—it is too late, Melton, my heart may break, but I feel it cannot bend!”

“ We will brave it together,” said Melton, touched to the quick by the melancholy tone in which his father had spoken.

“ Well—well—Martha, come in,—what is the coachman’s fare ?” said Sir John to the old woman ; while he answered his son by a nervous pressure of the hand, and a look of fervent gratitude.

Both father and son opened their purses at the same moment, to discharge the demand which had been made. The hands of both were extended at the same moment towards the servant’s hand, which was prepared to receive the amount. She looked from one to the other, as in doubt from whom she was to take the proffered money, till age seemed to decide the point ; and with a respectful courtesy she received it from Sir John.

Neither father nor son had spoken, though their eyes had met. When the servant’s back was turned, and once more they were left to themselves—

“ It matters not !” said Sir John, with a deep-drawn sigh ; “ alas ! Melton, our interest

and means are now but one—and that is one of poverty and ruin.”

“ Let us hope,” answered Melton—though as yet ignorant of the position in which he was placed;—“ let us hope, my father! with life and health, I will not despair. But now, you told me you were rich; I too, have I not found a treasure, purer than the metals of earth? Yes, my honoured father! rich in the affections of your love, I will brave the world, and struggle to atone for the heartless past by devotion for the future.”

“ If I had but my sight,” said Sir John, with reviving energy, “ we might, perhaps—but I fear——”

“ What? tell me, what?” asked Melton; who, recalling for the first time the allusion in his father’s letter to the loss of sight, he looked in his face. The pupils were bright—bright with the swelling tear, which, alas! even the blind can shed. “ I can see no change, my father, except they tell me you have found a son.”

“ Thank God! I have, and grateful I am

that the power has been given to behold my son ; but, clear as they may seem to you, there is a veil of darkness between the blessed rays of heaven and the powers of vision ; it may be removed, but if ——”

“ Doubt not, my dear father, it may—it must be, and your sight shall be restored.”

“ At least it shall be tried, my son ; but if the nerves be spent—if, like the mind when overwrought, they are dead within the living body—then, Melton, there is no hope, no refuge, but—the grave. I feel I shall bow my head in darkness—say, ‘ Thy will be done,’—and die ! ”

“ My dearest father ! ” said Melton, taking his father’s hand affectionately between his own ; “ this is not like yourself; for my sake you must not despair; you told me you could not bend.”

“ To man and the world I never will ; but, to my Father in heaven, the children of woe—the strongest, and proudest—must bow their head. At this moment blindness is to me like night, when the storm is raging, and the vessel

has struck. Vision, the blessed gift of sight, is that which alone can save us from shipwreck; for your sake I implore it—for your sake I will not despair."

We leave the reader to picture the gentler proofs of kindness, duty, and devotion, which followed the burst of stronger feelings. Hitherto, the father and son had floated on the sunny stream of life, held apart, as it were, by the powers of repulsion. The storm had risen; they had been driven within the range of attraction—had rushed heart and hand to each other, and met—to part no more.

If this idea be too philosophic, the reader must picture the anxious father suggesting the rest and worldly wants needed by the son. He must figure the grateful son, striving to cheer the spirits of his afflicted father—guiding his footsteps, and tendering the services of a faithful servant to him whom returning dimness rendered but too helpless.

CHAPTER VII.

A VOYAGE FROM THE WEST TO LOMBARD STREET.

“‘ Stand back !’ cried Reformation,
‘ The Church is in my way ;
Obedient to the nation
St. Dunstan must obey !’

He took the hint, and made his bow ;
Yet, feeling somewhat sore,
He rose again with loftier brow
Than he had worn before.”

Travels in the East.

WE are now about to bid adieu to the halls and castles of the county Great—to Grosvenor Square, St. James’s, and the haunts of rank and fashion : we are, fair reader, about to transport you to the heart of the filthy, smoky city, the haunts of money-making men : but be not cast down ; there has been a *reaction* in bricks and mortar.

What a capital word this “ reaction ” is—the

happiest that a routed ministry could hit upon, its application is so pointed, yet infinite. Since there is nothing new under the sun, the world is greatly indebted to a man who gives a new turn and fashion to a few old-fashioned letters. What gratitude is due to the mouth which uttered—“untoward,” and, by these three syllables, backed out of a scrape which volumes could not have explained away! How many of us, in a great predicament, jump at the happy phrase! What thousands praise the pious Sir Andrew *Agneau!*—(if the spelling be wrong, we plead the excuse of its being *a proper name.*) What thousands praise the word “desecrate!” How gladly is it echoed from Exeter to Dublin! How, with its aid, are the changes rung upon the sins against the Sabbath, the Church, and the revenues thereof! How boldly it enables Sir Andrew to frisk, like a lamb before a storm, and do mischief in its innocent way!—for, be it said by the way, lambs are only harmless in poetry, and a tame sheep is the most mischievous of pets. Now, with this “desecration” in his mouth, it sounds good to close the poor man’s oven on the Sabbath, and

let the rich have their banquets—to let the Bishop ride to Church, and — ; but, leaving Sir Andrew to his good, but weak intentions, *revenons à nos moutons.*

Since the genius of Cruikshank gave us the picture of “ London walking out of town,”—if the haystacks and trees, to which he gave life and legs, have not walked back again—London has, in some measure, come back, like the blood which returns to the heart. If “ Northumberland House ” be not restored to the lanes and country in which it formerly stood, it once more breathes with expanded lungs. St. James’s Park once more smiles beneath the hand of a royal master; and ducks, swans, black and white, with geese without end, grace the waters as thickly as in the days of King Charles ; and though, for lack of girths, his most gracious Majesty may fear to exercise his “ *cheval de bronze,*” yet may we see that the horse, which a certain Alderman styled the “ *Statute at Charing Cross,*” has become a “ *Statute at large,*” since the plebeian dwellers upon earth have retreated to a

most respectful distance. Nay, were Melton de Mowbray still living, young and joyous as when first introduced to the reader, we firmly believe he would have passed his old boundary of Carlton Palace, and left a card with his Grace the Duke of Northumberland in his cab, or on the outside of a horse, instead of in the inside of a carriage, hermetically sealed “for fear of the smoke of the city.”

Thus, fair ladies and gentle swains, we hope to have gained one step in our advances; next let us add, that the reaction has extended further. The once narrow Strand has expanded to receive you; there is no longer the chance of being eaten up by wild beasts, and startled by the giants of St. Dunstan’s.

The saint and his church have receded, and the iron men who rudely hinted at the flight of time, have themselves, with the beasts and other strange animals, flown to the Regent’s Park.*

* The figures of St. Dunstan’s clock were purchased by the Marquess of Hertford, and removed to his villa near the Zoological Gardens.

Thus far ye cannot hesitate to bear us company: and if, alas! the bloody shambles on which many a wise and many a calf's head has been exposed, still oppose your path at Temple Bar, we beg to assure ye that the rains of heaven have long since washed away the stains of blood; and the once warlike citizens are now too gallant to close their gates on any but the king and his frightened troops. This barrier passed, as a further enticement, we can quote the precedent of peeresses and brides who still will venture to Rundell and Bridge, and risk their carriage at the door; still do we occasionally see the silk-stockened coachman, with the coroneted carriage waiting, like a gold fish in a gutter, and expecting, with patrician nerve, to be crushed by a coal-heaver's waggon; still do we sometimes see two six-feet footmen standing at the door, and, like the gilt salmon over their heads, looking down with contempt upon the passing cits.

But we, fair readers, will not tarry by the way; ye shall run no risk from the rough

stream of commerce; and if crowned heads have visited St. Paul's, the Bank, and India House, ye will not, we humbly hope and pray, desert our poor and sorrowing hero when he takes up his abode—in Lombard Street!

To have said thus much is a relief; we have told the worst: in doing this, we have endeavoured to pave the way, and encourage the most sensitive of readers: our labours, we trust, have not been in vain, and we are fain to believe that all will survive the shock.

After this, we should not be afraid to describe the time-hallowed banking-house of Messrs. D'Aubigny, Mowbray, and Co.; but the task were idle, as there are still in existence firms of the old school to whose mud-splashed windows we could point as a parallel; we still know some with their low, dark rooms, with ceiling, wainscot floors, and counters blackened with the breath of Mammon, its unwashed haunt for centuries and centuries; to these we could point for resemblance ere we entered the dark, narrow court, which led to the dwelling-house, where Mr. D'Aubigny, the

rich banker who sheltered the exiled Eustace de Mowbray, lived until he died ; and where now Sir John de Mowbray and his son were about to take up their abode.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLINDNESS.

“ Shut from the living while among the living !
Dark as the grave amidst the bustling world.
Ah ! once from business, and from pleasure barred,
No more to view the beauty of the spring,
Nor see the face of kindred or of friend ! ”—TATE.

SIR JOHN DE MOWBRAY, building on the possibility of his son's arrival by the mail, had repaired to his splendid mansion in Grosvenor Square, and directed the old woman who was left in charge, to prepare his bed. The command was obeyed ; but sleep, that precious balm to the breaking heart, refused to visit the anxious and distracted father.

To active minds, the approach of blindness falls like the shadow of death ; it seems like a shutting out from the busy world before their time ; it closes on their energies like the

living grave, and sets the seal of death upon their doom while the pulse of life is strong; such, at least, is the first impression when this heavy affliction arrests the schemes, the ways, the restless occupations, which, from habit, have become identified with life, a very part of existence.

Again, and how forcibly, might the word “reaction” be used, when Milton arises in our thoughts as a proof how, in some instances, the elasticity of the mind can recover from the shock of blindness, and live in the inward light of the soul’s imagining; but Milton, alone in the age he distanced, alone in and above the millions of succeeding ages, stands forward rather as a brilliant exception to a general rule. Milton, moreover, was comparatively young when he lost his sight; and thought — deep, intense, and heavenlike — had been, from boyhood, his busy occupation. The worlds and glories of creation, which he had seen and worshipped, were known by heart; and when the film of darkness fell upon his eyes and excluded for ever the sunny rays which light our earthly vision, he felt,

exquisitely felt, yet battled with the blow ; he mourned with resignation, yet rose a conqueror, like a giant refreshed by sleep ; he awoke to mightier deeds, and soared on high, where none of woman-born had dared to tread. His soul trimmed her lamp anew. Apart, and shrouded from the glare of worldly things, it burned in solitude with brighter, purer, holier flame, and led his immortal genius to gaze on heaven, to paint the glories of Almighty God, and sing the mercies of redemption.

This is, however, as we have said, rather an exception ; there are few, indeed, so trained, so fitted to endure the trial ; fewer still amidst the mass of men so gifted with the powers of mind and spirit as to make unto themselves a second nature, and commune with the mind alone.

And when, as in the case of Sir John de Mowbray, blindness occurs as the voyage of life is drawing to a close, at the moment when the harbour is in sight, yet the storm arises when the reef, undreamt of in the chart of life, wrecks the pilot who slumbers at the

helm, and casts him headlong, to buffet with the dark and troubled waves; then, indeed, is the affliction doubled a hundred fold; the strength of the swimmer can avail him nothing; he knows, or thinks, that he might be saved if he could but see; but, deprived of sight, he feels that all exertions are vain, that it is better to sink at once than perish “like a strong swimmer in his agony.”

Such were the melancholy thoughts which pressed upon Sir John de Mowbray’s mind, as, day by day, the powers of vision failed, and he trembled at the want of success which might, perhaps, attend the act of couching. In addition to these, the expected interview with his son conjured up a thousand anxieties, doubts, and harrowing recollections of the past; he felt that, as a father, he had been stern, if not forbidding; his child, his only child, had not replaced the wife he had adored and lost; the innocent babe which the mother had deserted, was, in some sort, blended with her crime. As the child became a boy, the boy a man, the father hailed him with a father’s pride, and said within his heart, “He is

worthy of the name he bears," and prayed that De Mowbray's line might live in him; but the softer touches of affection were seared; the companionship and confidence of love existed not; there was in the son such marked resemblance to his mother's beauty, that the father involuntarily shrunk from reposing in one to whom his feelings yearned. Often and often, when the floodgates of the heart were opened by the charms and graces of childhood's winning hour, there was a look, a smile, a word so like to her who had wronged his passionate devotion, that the unhappy father started as if an asp had stung his bosom; the rushing tide was curdled; and the floodgates closed. "Her very image!" he would say within himself, struggling to repress or moderate the measure of love which he dreaded, yet longed to pour upon his son.

The distant coldness of an elder, soon teaches the young to shun their society; thus, the manners of the world and Melton's independence continued to widen the breach, if such expression may be used to mark the division between father and son, who had never ex-

changed an angry word or thought. While such was their relative position, Sir John had but one wish, one point in view, and that centred in his son's aggrandisement and welfare; it was this alone which induced him to add his name to the firm for the twofold purpose of entailing an heritage of wealth, which, in the character of partner, he might dispose of to advantage, or continue to reap a golden harvest for himself, if such were his inclination. The villainy of the man who had gambled, robbed, and absconded, not only destroyed these dreams of wisdom, but, making the independence of Melton subject to the debts of the house, the son was involved in the ruin of the father.

“ How will he meet this loss? may he not upbraid my weakness of implicit faith? will he judge my intentions rightly, or, looking to the sad result, condemn me as the author of his undeserved misfortune?”

Such were the reflections which added their torture to the worldly and bodily afflictions which had smitten the unhappy father;

and, as the hour of meeting approached, their racking force increased.

While Melton de Mowbray snatched moments of troubled sleep in the whirling mail, Sir John tossed beneath the canopy of his splendid couch, with the sleepless restlessness of the fevered mind. “My poor child! my ruined, my injured boy!” he exclaimed aloud, as he raised his head from the downy pillows, which seemed to mock the repose he had invoked. “And will he forgive me? does he—can he love me?” was a fearful inquiry which arose again and again, as he looked back upon the icy barrier which had divided the father from the son. Again and again the watch was raised to the doubtful ear, and struck; the hours and quarters were counted, as if Time, at least, had learned to slumber in the dead of night. At length the dark and weary dawnings of a winter’s day was slowly sounded by the gold repeater; and Sir John, springing from his bed of wretchedness, felt it a relief to dress, to watch and prepare for the coming of his son.

The meeting has been given to the reader ; we have only to add, that in that moment both father and son found a happiness unknown till then. The hidden tears of filial and paternal love had been awakened by the voice of nature. Hitherto they had slept like the pure, undreamed-of drops concealed within the flint ; but now, in the hour of trial, they gushed from their strong prison, which opened like the rock when softened by the Prophet's rod. For a time, all other thoughts were forgotten,—all sorrows absorbed in the intensity of that sacred joy.

“ Come—come—Melton, you must be weary and in need of rest,” said Sir John, forgetting his own condition and the sleepless night he had passed : “ come, my dear son, and see that neither your welcome nor wants have been forgotten.”

With these words, Sir John took his son by the hand, and with little difficulty led him to the door of a bedroom adjoining his own. It was in vain that Melton declared he felt no fatigue ; and when the door opened, and he saw

the blazing fire—the curtained bed—the table spread with the toilet—the steaming water, with all appliances to boot—when his father, pointing to a pair of furred slippers, smiled, and said—"Now, Melton, my dear boy, you must let me be your valet, your nurse, and what you will; and I fear"—brushing aside a tear which had started from his eye, and mingled with the smile—"I fear your once stern father has been touched with the weakness of woman." When Melton heard this, he could only fall upon his father's neck, and submit with gratitude to all those little nothings—those homely offices of love—which speak to the heart at once, and laugh to scorn the offerings of gold.

"No, no, my dear father, you must not—you shall not wait upon me," said Melton, declining as gently as he could some proffered assistance; "that is a duty, a happiness, due to yourself from me. And was it your own hand which thus has provided for my wants?"

"Idleness, Melton, is a curse to the active mind, and action a blessing to the wretched. Till this hand had pressed thee to my heart, it

knew more joy in these humble details than it had known for years ; and, to confess the truth, I slept but ill."

" How selfish I have been !" exclaimed Melton, as he drew back and read the haggard look which was cast upon the handsome features of Sir John ; " promise me, my father, to seek the repose you recommend, and I will promise to obey in all your love ordains."

There was no resisting this bribery. The anxious father, while he returned in silence the pressure of his son's hand, allowed himself to be conducted to his own room.

" Let us pray, my son," said Sir John in a low, yet solemn tone, using that simple invitation of our liturgy, and pointing to the bedside by which they stood. Their hearts were full to overflowing ; there needed no second appeal ; both father and son sank on their knees, and, covering their faces, in silent, fervent prayer they called upon the Saviour's name, and communed with their God.

Sir John was the first to arise ; and placing his hand upon the head of his son, while yet in

the attitude of kneeling, he repeated a father's blessing, by saying—“ Bless thee! bless thee, my son! and above all, may the Father who is in heaven bless thee, watch thee, and reward thee, when my voice is in the grave!”

Melton was too much overcome to speak, but tendering the first duties—which, next to his Father in heaven, he had vowed to his earthly parent—he aided Sir John to his couch; and, while he yet watched the exhausted sufferer, was rewarded by seeing his eyelids close in the depth of slumber, which during the lingering hours of night had flown the silent chamber.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PICTURE.

“ Likeness is ever there ; but still the best,
Like proper thoughts in lofty language dressed,
Where light to shade descending plays, not strives,
Dies by degrees, and by degrees revives.
Of various parts a perfect whole is wrought,
Thy pictures think, and we divine their thought.”

DRYDEN.

As Melton de Mowbray gazed upon his sleeping father, and listened to his deep-drawn breath, he could not but remark the change which anxiety had wrought within a few brief months. There was still the proud and haughty sternness of character which had ever been the marked expression of the face and forehead. On the latter, it appeared to hold its undisputed empire ; but, on the cheeks were written traces of mental agony. The mouth, usually com-

pressed and close, was slightly open, and its corners bent downwards, as if in sleep ; at least, its firmness had been swayed by the weaker nerves which had sunk in furrows by its side. At times, too, a heavy sigh escaped, or the under lip quivered with some passing convulsion ; then again it closed, with a look of resolute defiance, till the deadness of slumber fell upon the dreamer, and once more the muscles relaxed to the softer expressions of settled grief.

There is something touchingly impressive in watching the strong in mind—the mighty in the day of battle—the man of stern, uncompromising spirit, as, steeped in oblivion and yielding to exhaustion, the senses recruit their expended force, and the strength of body, helpless and unguarded, is levelled to an infant's power. There is a something irresistibly attractive in speculating upon the thoughts and feelings of the busy brain, which wanders uncontrolled, unconscious of our gaze ;—“ there lies the thing we love,” or the being at whose glance we have feared or trembled, or, it may

be, the one whose deeds have stung us to hatred and revenge. We live, and feel that we do so, while those we look upon are bound in living death. How forcibly has truth been taught at such a moment!—how characters have been betrayed, by one starting tear—by a sigh, or word!

While Mowbray was still standing by the bed, he could not but reproach himself for having wronged his father's heart, and lost years of happiness which could never be recalled. While renewing, within himself, the resolution of atonement, his name escaped the dreamer's lips, accompanied by another which had never passed them from that hour when she who bore it left her home for ever.

“ My Julia! my wife! look upon our child!” exclaimed Sir John, starting from his pillow, and awaking with the vivid fancy of some passing scene.

“ My dear father!” cried Mowbray, taking the hand which swept the vacant air, as if it sought the touch of substance.

“ Melton,” answered Sir John, at once recognising his voice and touch; “ are we not

alone? I thought—I dreamt—it matters not. This is not kind, Melton, you promised to retire; I ask it as a favour."

With something of the feeling of one who has unintentionally intruded upon the privacy of another, Mowbray arranged his father's pillow, and obeyed.

"She, too, my poor unhappy mother! has she also dwelt within his memory, her name been linked with mine?" asked Mowbray of himself, as he vainly endeavoured to recall the slightest allusion by his father to her, whom he had named in his sleep.

Lady de Mowbray, had she been numbered with the dead of ages past—as little known as the mummy unswaddled to the curious—could not, to all outward appearance, have been more completely rooted from remembrance; her flight had made no change; she passed away as if she had sojourned for a while in an age and sphere to which she did not belong, and then had returned to whence she came. Her books—her ornaments—her flowers—all of the thousand trifles which might have been supposed the sources of sad associations—all

were suffered to remain ; they seemed to have neither the power to wound nor please ; the injured husband took no steps to punish the man who had robbed him of that which nothing could repay. The shrine was profaned, polluted, broken, and nothing could restore it—nothing replace it : he neither sought to obtain a divorce, nor gild his sorrows by the thousands which the laws might have decreed ; he stood alone in the strength of his pride, and, with the exception of a settlement which would insure the guilty from want, neither by deed, by word, or thought, was Sir John de Mowbray ever known to betray an allusion to the woman who had wronged him—no—not even to his son.

Under such circumstances, it may be readily imagined how the sound of his mother's name, bursting, as it were, from the grave of hidden thoughts, fell upon the ear of Melton de Mowbray. If in sleep there be something awful and mysterious, it is doubly so when the dreamer's mind breaks forth and bursts the fetters which the living spirit has imposed for years and years ; bitter, galling, and wretched,

were the reflections conjured up by the name—the Christian name—of her who gave him birth, by the father's appeal in favour of his son to the wife who had deserted both. “Oh! my poor deluded mother,” said Melton aloud, as he gave vent to the feelings of his heart, “could you have heard those simple words—could you have looked upon us then—could you have witnessed our meeting but now, and thought how we had been estranged for years, how deep had been your agony—how scalding the tears of your repentance—how”—he continued wildly, as his thoughts darted to a darker channel, and maddened with the spectre which crossed his path—“how you would have hated, loathed, and execrated the villain, the tempter, the wretch, whose hardened heartstrings I could tear asunder! Yes, my father, your wrongs shall be avenged; I have sworn it a thousand times! I have panted for his blood, as the gasping pilgrim prays for the sight of water. I have prayed to look upon the serpent which has stung us both, and sworn that the reptile shall be bruised, crushed, and trampled under

foot. Yes, if we meet, the man shall die, and I will feast my eyes upon the writhing agonies of him who spoiled me of a mother, and robbed thee, my poor father, of happiness, home, and honour."

Such was the deadly resolution of revenge which Melton spoke or meditated, as the image of his mother's seducer haunted his imagination. It may be remembered that, in the earlier pages of our tale, we alluded to this one dark spot which lurked in a heart framed by nature for kindly feelings to all mankind, to every living creature.

It were difficult to say, whether it were the vivid impression made by the loss of his mother, or the babbling tongues of attendants, which planted and fostered this evil feeling. Be this as it may, so early had it taken root, and possessed the mind, that it seemed to be identified with the first perception of memory—with the dawning of thought and determination.

The parting scene of his mother, while yet she lingered to gaze upon her first-born, her only child—her start, her agony, the burst of

grief, the conflict of contending passions, when the tempter was heard to chide the frail but gifted being, who paused upon the threshold of perdition—the recollection of those brief but thrilling moments was so deeply engraved upon the tender tablets of his brain, that all previous impressions were erased ; it seemed as if the voice which called his mother from her home, was ever sounding in his ear. The sports and spirits of childhood's happy hour could not drown its lengthened echo ; and oft and oft he has turned from his fellows to think of the mother who, untwining the arms which he had flung around her neck, fled to the embraces of a villain. “ Oh ! how I wish I were a man, that I might kill him ! ” was the blood-thirsty prayer which formed within the growing heart, and blanched the young lips which spoke it.

As Melton advanced in life, the knowledge of the world, its heartless modes and fashions, did much to quell this revengeful spirit of an Indian's chivalry ; he felt that the world would only ridicule the son who, after an interval of years, called his mother's seducer to account.

There were also holier feelings which influenced his mind ; religion taught him that vengeance belonged to the Power above, and he would pray to be spared the trial of the meeting which he had so long and so intently wished for ; but, on the other hand, there were moments when the smouldering embers were kindled in an instant, and burst with such ungovernable flame, that the shafts of ridicule and voice of religion fell before its rage.

Such was the moment which we have exposed to the reader's view, when Mowbray's thoughts had been so unexpectedly turned to the image of his mother by her name, which had mingled with the dreams of his father.

Faithful to his promise, and anxious to prepare for the trials which awaited his coming, he laid his head upon the pillow, and strove to forget, in sleep, the stormy workings of deadly and embittered memory. He struggled to subdue the demon of revenge, by praying for the spirit of peace, and placing before his eyes the holy task of tending his helpless and stricken parent. The effort was not in vain : he gained

a short interval of broken rest ; and then arose subdued, calm, and comparatively happy.

Independent of the luxury in a morning's toilet to the weary traveller, Mowbray felt a melancholy pleasure in the kind arrangements which his father had prepared : how true it is that “ trifles make the sum of human happiness !” and alas ! in another sense, how true it is that trifles can strike the chord of deepest woe, and make the strongest heart vibrate with the note it wakens !

Dull, cold, indeed, must be the reader who thinks that the image of Lady Helen had passed, like a forgotten dream, from the mind of our hero. No : we might almost say that it had never been absent ; but he felt that it was an image on which he dared not dwell ; he knew that to do so would unman him for the sterner duties to which his destiny had called him : still, however, as if her spirit hovered around his path, to watch, to bless, and cheer him in the hour of trial, she seemed as ever present ; the portrait was shrined within his bosom ; its influence, its rays, were felt, though clouds had intervened ; and if, but

now, in the wild tumult of revengeful passion, this guardian light had been extinguished by the flashes of unholy rage, soon—soon—did he feel again the milder influence of her who shone in purity and gentleness.

Melton de Mowbray had all but accomplished the refreshing task of his toilet, when, in order to complete it, he sought some trifle from the small *valise* which had formed his travelling equipage: the contents were quickly displaced, and with these the letter from his father.

In the moment of excitement and despair, he had forgotten whether he had or had not received it from the hand of Lady Blankisle, and he now hailed with pleasure a paper which, however melancholy its contents, had spoken for the first time with the sacred voice of parental love. Once more he unfolded the ruffled pages, and, as he did so, the winter flowers which, but the previous morning, he had plucked for Lady Helen Fawndove, fell at his feet.

“Emblem of our hopes!” he said aloud, with a sigh, as he collected the relics which he

had unconsciously preserved ; “ but yesterday blooming and bright, and now withered like the grass which is mown. Alas! my Helen, my own beloved, even thus it is : my own, though mine no longer, in memory of thee these shall be guarded like a chaplet on the tomb, as sacred to the hopes which are no more.” And as these thoughts were passing in his mind, the leaves, the buds, stems, and blossoms, were gathered together with the fervour of a devotee. The image of Lady Helen, thus unexpectedly forced upon his mind, held for the moment undivided possession. There was something so poignantly sad in the sight of the offering which had faded ere it was touched by the hand intended to receive it, that Mowbray could not resist the temptation of pressing to his lips the lock of hair which he treasured in his bosom—the unfading emblem of a passion cherished in secret, but unchanging and unchangeable.

This weakness, if such it might be called, was followed by an effort to master its influence; the relics were hidden from sight, and he returned to his father’s room. Having

opened the door with noiseless hand, he crept to the bedside; and ascertaining that the dreamer slept profoundly, he retired as lightly as he entered. Whither should he go?—how employ his time to wile the moments which, left to themselves, centred, like rays of thought in a bright and distant star, the lovely and deserted Lady Helen? He determined to visit once more the magnificent suite of rooms which had so often been thronged with the highest and the loveliest of the land. How striking was the contrast now! Not a step, not a voice was heard upon the magnificent staircase of stone—the splendid gilding of the banisters made them look doubly cold—the carpets, rich with the colours of an Eastern loom, were piled upon the landing, and labelled with the numbers of the lot they formed. Melton entered the drawing-rooms, where all remained in their usual, or in something more than their wonted order; one by one he opened the shutters, and was almost startled by the noise of the falling bars, where, but a few months before, words were scarcely audible amidst the buzz of a fashionable world. On all things was the

brand of misfortune — figures which told that they were about to pass to the hands of the highest bidder — that the riches, which one man had heaped together, were about to be scattered abroad. "And that one man," sighed Mowbray, "is my generous and noble father!"

With a determination to change or divide the one deep current of his thoughts, he continued to gaze, for the last time, on the countless objects of *virtù* familiar from his boyhood. What volumes recorded in the past did they open to the mind! What endless associations arose from the abyss of departed days — from the wreck of the few bright years which had been taken from his span of life! Once more he looked upon the fossils or gems which had first awakened his attention to the wonders of nature, or the ingenuity of man. There was the insect, exquisitely fine, embalmed in amber, not a limb, not a feather of its wing disturbed. O, mockery of Egyptian cunning — the wonderful but ghastly mummy — what stores of knowledge and research had sprung from this! — how richly had it fed the infant appetite of learning! Beside it was the moss and sea-

weed, with not a fibre bent, enshrined within its tomb of light, the peerless and eternal crystal!—how often had he listened to his father's voice, which told of God's creation and the changes of the world!—how often had he begged to be lifted in his arms to look upon man's masterpiece of art—the ship of war! there was still the model formed in spotless ivory, the yards were manned, the shrouds crowded by the climbing sailors, as when first they caught his infant wonder; and there were still the real brass cannon, which, when older, he had so longed to steal and fire.

From these cabinets, filled with all that was costly or rare, he passed to a room hung with pictures by the first masters. As his eye was ranging from one to the other—now soothed by the solemn stillness of repose which Claude inspires, or now strengthened in endurance by the calmness of divinity, which beamed amidst the tortures of the suffering Christ—his attention was attracted by a picture reversed, unhung, and leaning against the wall. Moving it round, he immediately recognised it as one of the happiest efforts of Sir Joshua

Reynolds; in which, indulging the wild and poetic fancy which often inspired his hand, he had represented the lovely and commanding Lady de Mowbray as a gipsy: her superb, dark, and dazzling eyes, the marked profile of her face, the length of her glossy raven locks, and her commanding height, admirably fitted her for the character. Sir Joshua, struck, it would seem, by the high and noble daring written on her brow—reading the aspirations of a mind above the many—felt that the subject was worthy of the master, and determined to burst the tame trammels of passive resemblance: the portrait was embodied, but the painting was a picture for posterity.

The scenery was lone and desolate. In the background and on the right, the dark tints of a gipsy encampment were blended with a stormy horizon; in the foreground and on the left, stood one solitary tree, blasted, withered, and bent by the winds which threatened to strip the few branches which clung to life, and lived amidst decay; in the centre stood Lady de Mowbray, pre-eminently beautiful, and invested with the wild dignity of one who could

read the stars—the priestess of futurity; the well-known gipsy hat had been cast aside, or borne unheeded by the blast; her forehead, high, expansive, and uncovered, shone with the light of intellect, while her glossy locks, touched by the rays of heaven, seemed like the stream of stars. A scarlet cloak waved like a meteor, and bared a neck which rose as a column worthy of its temple. No ornament, nothing foreign to the fancied character, was introduced, excepting a black, smoke-dried, hazel rod, terminating in three irregular forks, and resting on the fortuneteller's arm. The trickery of art was not there; and, excepting the symmetry of form, the small and tapered figures, there was nothing but the intellectual beauty of expressive features, which held a proud pre-eminence though clad in the garb of poverty. Opposite to this striking figure stood one, the type of gentleness and love, hope and fear. A being slight, young, and exquisitely fair, had submitted one hand to the divination of the priestess, while, with the other, she retained the ribands of a bonnet

formed from the simple straw, light and spotless as herself. A profusion of hair, bright as burnished gold, fell upon her shoulders, and partly concealed the rose which trembled on the cheek; eyebrows, finely arched and comparatively dark, gave a depth of expression to the blue-veined brow; the eyes, all but veiled by the falling lid, were intently fixed upon the mysterious lines of her fairy hand; and, though the long dark lashes completed the shroud, either the small blue veins upon the forehead, the robe of white, the sash of blue, the purity of tint, or look of innocent simplicity—a something, in short, aerial and angelic—told the spectator that when the lids were raised he would gaze upon eyes of heavenly blue—the colour was felt, though veiled from sight. The group was completed by a magnificent dog, which watched its gentle mistress; while our hero, decked in the tattered garments of a gipsy boy, shoeless and unstockinged, stood by its side: one foot was thrown across the back he had vainly endeavoured to stride; and, as he rested an elbow⁶ on the shaggy neck, he archly

mocked his mother, by pointing, with the finger of one hand, to some pebbles which, in lieu of money, he held in the palm of the other.

Such was the composition of which we have endeavoured to convey a faint conception to the reader, and which, of course, was instantly revealed to De Mowbray. The last time he had looked upon it Lady Helen was by his side. Some hoped-for sketch, some flower, or trifle for which he had sued in vain, was again requested, as they contemplated the figures on the canvass.

“ Will you never cease to be a beggar?” was Lady Helen’s playful answer, as she pointed to the wild costume which Sir Joshua’s fancy had bestowed. How forcibly did the words recur to mind which then had passed!—how well he remembered his saying in return, “ that he feared he was born to be a beggar, and that she, of all others, was born to make him feel it!”

“ And is not the dress irresistibly becoming?” he added, in his light and sportive manner.

“With Sir Joshua, or Murillo, for a valet, undoubtingly. What a pity you are rich! I fear I should never resist your petitions, if poor; but that can never be, so cease to importune me,” was Lady Helen’s answer, as she paused to take another look at the graceful beggar boy; and then left the boy, who had become a man, to fulfil her promise to some favoured partner for a dance.

Now that these words recurred, he felt they had been uttered with prophetic force; and by one of those coincidences—which, whether chance or not, strike with the force of truth—they received additional weight. He was still musing on the recollection of the past, when, on the tattered trousers which imperfectly concealed the rosy leg, he read “Lot 1791.”

“This very year!” he exclaimed, as by an involuntary association his thoughts passed from the lot which had overtaken his career, to the date in which it had befallen.

“This very year!” and he added, “alas! how like the fate which is pictured on the canvass! my poor mother, an outcast from the

world—my father, still in the strength of manhood, smitten like the oak by the hand of Heaven—I, the beggar I was pictured. Helen! my beloved Helen! where shall I turn to hide me from your image? How can I atone for the misery I have caused, by linking your fate with mine? and how divide the thoughts which yearn to dwell with you alone? But it must not—it shall not be!" And Mowbray strove to busy his imagination with the insight given to his father's character—he tried to figure the current of his father's reflections, while meditating upon these portraits of his wife and child. Did he wish that the picture should be saved from the gibes and jeers of heartless bidders? Was it his hand that had turned their faces to the wall, and attempted to tear off the "Lot" attached to the canvass? Had he, too, read the fulfilment of a fancied prophecy? Had he, too, like himself, wandered alone through the silent rooms, and raised the visions of the past? Such were the questions which Melton asked, and attempted to solve. Thus it was that he strove to fly from one too

absorbing theme, when the more active means of diverting his mind were prevented by a summons from old Martha, to attend the breakfast-table of his father.

De Mowbray only tarried to restore the picture to the position in which he had found it. In doing this, a stronger light fell upon the principal figures; and he was actually startled by the pallid hue which seemed, on a sudden, to have fallen on the noble features of his mother. Was it fancy? He once more placed the picture against the wall, and retired to the distance at which he stood but now: again he looked, and his mind, once again directed to the point, was again convinced; nay, as his eyes wandered from his mother to himself, he perceived, or fancied that he saw, the ruddy hues pass from the cheeks of the laughing gipsy boy, as if the senseless canvass had felt the withering hour in which his hopes had perished.

He was not altogether wrong. The colours of Sir Joshua were, alas! flying, if they had not flown. Even then they were upon the wing;

and if the rosier tints of life had not already passed to the hues of death, they were approaching but too rapidly to that untimely fate, which has been accomplished in these our days. Alas! for genius! how perishable are the works of man!

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Alderman Skinner, Auctioneer, and so forth. One of his lots knocked down before its time :—

Going ! going ! gone !

IN attempting to give the reader an insight to the recesses of Sir John de Mowbray's heart, as also to the deeper feelings of our hero, we have certain misgivings. If observation has taught us that the strongest characters are more frequently betrayed by trifles, we have also learnt how difficult it is to give importance or interest to these finer shades.

This is a spirit-stirring age, and all things wanting in depth, in breadth, and force, are unpalatable : in other words, we fear lest we may have been noted dull, prosy, and mawkish.

Our love of honesty has wrung from us this confession. We authors are but a company

of spinners and weavers; and, as there are black sheep in every flock, so are there some amongst us, who, being paid by the yard, are apt to spin out their thread at the imminent risk of breaking down with the reader. Now, we disclaim the imputation; we have no such intention of writing fine with a vengeance; and, if charged with an offence so solemn, we protest our innocence, and declare the accusation to be unfounded. No: our intentions are honest; and if our unskilful hands have failed in weaving the finer texture of our tale—if the more delicate materials have baffled the attempt of our clumsy fingers, there is the fault,* and thus far only are we guilty. Bear with us a little longer, most gentle reader: we shall presently return to work of a rougher cast—to patterns of the human heart, as bold, as rough, and varied, as the veriest of radicals could wish.

“How have you slept, my dear father?” said Melton, as he entered the dressing-room; and taking Sir John’s hand, pressed it affectionately to his lips.

“ King Richard is himself again !” replied Sir John, as he drew up his fine figure, and a something of his wonted sternness mingled with the smile of affection. “ What a poor, weak thing is man ! How soon are the strongest humbled, who taste not the food of rest ! My nights have been sleepless lately ; and the frame which I deemed of iron, has trembled like the aspen :—but tell me, Melton, did you not visit my room while I slept ?”

“ About an hour since I entered.”

“ And awoke me—did I not answer ?”

“ No, my dear father, you slept profoundly.”

“ Profoundly !” said Sir John, echoing the word, and looking fixedly in the face of his son : “ I have dreamt much—the impression is vivid as reality ; did I not speak ?—did I not see you ?”

“ Not then,” replied Melton, with something like hesitation in his manner, as he found that the words which had been spoken were partially erased by the profound sleep which had ensued. He felt also a something

of that habitual awe, which had ever imposed silence upon the theme that had escaped from the dreamer's lips.

"When was it, then, Melton? I perceive that it is not altogether fancy; you awoke me—you have been here twice."

"No indeed, my father; I staid by your side until you fell asleep, and, as I watched, you spoke."

"*Her name,*" said Sir John, in a deep and hurried under tone, while for a moment his lips appeared to quiver with the agony of feeling. "I thought it was so," he continued, in a calmer voice; "and did we not converse? what did I say?"

"I left you immediately; it was thus you requested."

"Yet, wherefore should I?" said Sir John apart, and sighing deeply. "It matters not, Melton; *she* was your mother, and the name I named must be as sacred to you as to myself. Come, come, we must strengthen the inward man: I hear old Martha's footsteps with the breakfast."

The quick eye of Melton had already

glanced, with something of surprise, at the servant's preparations ; but, fearful of wounding his father's feelings, he ventured no comment on the subject.

The service of the table was certainly not in strict accordance with the splendour of the room. The cloth was coarse, and common, abounding in cuts which had been darned, and many which gaped from more recent gashes. The cups, teapot, basin, *et cetera*, were mismatched, and various ; the once white plates were chipped, cracked, and turned to whity-brown ; some lumps of sugar were piled in a blue saucer ; a pound of butter, garnished with a stray cabbage leaf, overhung a small dish ; and (horror of horrors) large blunt, rusted knives, with yellow semi-transparent horn handles, lay in a heap beside a loaf of exquisite fineness. On the fire was a black teakettle, big enough to start a *bateau à vapeur* ; and, by the side of the tongs, the provident Martha had put a toasting-fork, worthy of becoming Neptune's trident.

“ How is this, Martha ? ” asked Sir John, whose attention was turned to the teakettle

by hearing the lid rattled by the rising steam, and feeling, at the same moment, a volume of the warm vapour which burst from the spout and played against his back. “ How is this? why have you not brought the urn ?”

“ Mr. Alderman Skinner, the auctioneer, Sir John, told me that you would not sleep in the house again.”

“ But having done so, why have you brought this unsightly kettle? why not have given us the urn ?”

“ The water’s sure to *bile* in the kettle, Sir John, and there’s no making tea if it don’t; and the urn’s in the butler’s pantry, and there are so many jimeracks with it, I doubt, Sir John, if it warn’t beyond my capacity,” said Martha, determined, if possible, to evade the true motives for her conduct.

“ Well, well, never mind ;—you, Melton, must attempt the task of tea-making, according to Martha’s rules : wheel the table to the fire, and let us profit by the ‘ *biling* ’ water.”

As the table approached, there was a something glaring and unusual in the arrangement, which struck even the dim perceptions of Sir

John ; when, immediately under his eyes, he became sensible of the incongruous medley which, in truth, was more worthy of the scullery than kitchen, and most unworthy of Sir John de Mowbray's room in Grosvenor Square.

" How is this, Martha ? " asked the offended baronet with anger, as he raised one of the plebeian knives ; and, disgusted by touching the handle, rough with relics of some boorish feast, threw it again on the table. " How, why is this, woman ? " he repeated more sternly ; as he fancied, for the moment, there had been some intention to insult.

" I ask your pardon, Sir John : indeed I'm very sorry, but indeed I didn't know what to do ; " answered the terrified servant, with stammering hesitation.

" Not know what to do ! Have you lived sixty years and upwards in my family, and not learnt how the heads of that family are accustomed to be served ? "

" It warn't ignorance or want of thought, Sir John, " said old Martha more boldly, as she felt how undeservedly she had been accused,

and warmed with a menial's devoted attachment ; “ I do know how the heads, and, saving your presence, the mouths and the stomachs too, should be served, for I watched for hours last night in the passage, because I thought you looked ill, and might want something warm in the night ; and when I heard you stepping backwards and forwards in your room, I prayed, Sir John, that you might lie your head on your pillow and sleep ; and I thought, too, of my young master's head a banging all night in the mail, and how hungry he'd be, and it's all the fault of that great Alderman Skinner, the auctioneer.”

Martha, like the kettle, had boiled over ; and her words, like the steam from the spout, came warm from the heart ; a tear or two seemed to have sprung from the same source ; for, as if they scalded her cheek, her apron removed them in an instant.

“ And pray, Martha, why is Mr. Alderman Skinner to be blamed ? ” inquired Sir John with kindness, and seemingly appeased by the garrulity which he had tolerated.

“ Why, Sir John, he came here with a set

of saucy wretches, and handled every thing about, and pasted on them bits of paper, and said you were never coming here again ; and he ordered, and he spoke, as if the house was his own ; and he said it was as much as my life was worth, if I touched any thing they had marked."

The eyes of father and son met as they had done when they mutually pulled out their purses to pay the coachman ; but this time there was a something ludicrous mingled with the sadder thoughts which had been revived.

" I see the poor baronet has no chance with a rich auctioneer, alderman of London, and so forth," said Sir John to his son, with a faint smile, which softened the sneer upon his face ; and then, addressing the obedient Martha, he assured her that her life should be spared though she opened the housekeeper's room and brought a more fitting supply for their table.

Martha was delighted to hear the counter-order from the head authority, and returned in the shortest possible time with plates, china, and knives, which accorded better with the taste and elegance of the surrounding furniture.

As if to spite the hateful alderman and auctioneer, she selected napkins and tablecloths of the finest damask. Melton aided the old woman in the preparations; and matters shortly assumed a very tempting look. While he was engaged in helping himself from a supply of cold meat which Martha's providential thought had prepared, she, with a delicacy of feeling, worthy of that refinement which education fosters, contrived to snatch away the plate which he was about to replenish, and substitute another. Her eye had detected on its rim one of those "nasty bits of paper" which the odious alderman-auctioneer had ordered to be put upon all things; and, judging from her own ideas on the subject, she thought it would by no means add to the appetite of her dear young squire.

"What's the matter now, Martha?" asked Melton, as his eyes partially glanced at the plate which disappeared.

"Nothing, sir," replied Martha, as she adroitly placed the substitute; "only the mark of a dirty hand on the top plate, which I did

not see in my hurry until now. I'll fetch some more with the eggs."

Under the cover of this plea Martha hurried off with the condemned plate, and she had left the room something less than a minute, when a violent smash was heard on the stairs.

"Poor Martha! I fear she has fallen down stairs," cried Melton, as he hastened to the door. "Martha! I hope you are not hurt?"

"Not me, sir, it was only the dirty plate; you shall have the eggs directly, sir;" and, kicking aside some of the fragments which stood in her path, she continued her descent, and muttered to herself, that, for her part, she wanted neither "Lot" nor "Lot's wife;" she knew well enough how to season her dishes without an alderman's help. "I wish them people would stay at home, and not poke their noses into other people's kitchens. Oh! how my fingers did itch to pin a dishclout on the tail of Mr. Alderman Skinner and his meddlesome men."

Poor Martha's tongue was, happily, a sort

of safety-valve, which, being let loose, soon relieved her inflammatory nature, and restored the kindlier feelings of her heart. By the time she returned with the eggs, her blood had sunk from boiling heat to temperate.

We leave the father and son to do what justice they can to the humble preparations of a faithful servant, and enjoy, as they may, the first meal that they had ever taken in the form of a *tête-à-tête*.

As was natural, the conversation turned upon the details of late occurrences, which were as yet unknown to Melton. The theme was melancholy in itself ; but, like the notes of some touching melody which mingle pleasure with the pain they impart, so did a thousand little proofs of love, devotion, and sympathy, relieve the dark and sombre views of that which had been, and must be yet.

It sometimes happens, that, when the mind is intently interested, the body works mechanically ; at the end of half-an-hour Melton looked down upon his empty plate, and for the first time felt or fancied that he had made a good breakfast.

CHAPTER XI.

A short, but necessary chapter of business, or the various ways of making money, taking money, and the mysteries of banking explained.

As Melton de Mowbray, so far, at least, as words were concerned, did little more than listen during the repast to which we have seated the father and son, we shall drop for a little the style conversational, and communicate, as briefly as may be, the pith of their discourse, or rather of the information conveyed by Sir John de Mowbray.

Time out of mind it had been the custom in the banking-house of Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. to add to the firm by selecting clerks who had served with fidelity; such, as usual, were the working men.

One Thomas Steel, and a Henry Bettison,

had thus been raised by Sir John to this envied distinction : both were men of ability ; but one, unfortunately, united the character of villain to the talents he possessed. Thomas Steel, once installed in the dignity of partner, took upon himself the management of the cash department ; and, having a head which Napoleon might have envied for assistant, the funds of the house were for a time admirably managed. The spirit of calculation having begotten the love of gambling, he speculated largely in the funds. Success attended his efforts : he soon became immensely rich : and this, for a length of time, was done with means which were fairly at his own disposal.

By degrees, avarice or ambition led him to bolder stakes, and he added to his own the money of the house. It is possible that, at first, his intentions were so far honest, that, had he succeeded, the unpermitted loan would have been replaced, and with it, perhaps, a fair proportion of profit. From this moment, however, ill luck defeated all his calculations, and his talents were thenceforth employed in hiding the deficiencies he had made, and in

devising the safest method of supplying the sums which he continued to venture: how ruinously, and yet how cleverly, this can be done, has been but too well instanced in the case of Fauntleroy and others. Steel, however, wearied with the task of concealment, and gradually hardened in dishonesty, absconded with thousands of the many thousands always within his power, and fled to America.

Henry Bettison, a frugal and saving man, had pursued a wiser and more honourable course; he put by his honest earnings, and multiplied the large profits which, even as a junior partner, came yearly to his share.

Having thus accumulated wealth, and purchased an estate in the county of Wiltshire, he retired from Lombard Street, to enjoy the *otium cum dignitate* of a country squire. Though scowled at for a time by the aborigines of the land, and treated much as if he were a criminal, for daring to breathe the same air as themselves, yet his riches gradually produced a change: when in want, they condescended to visit his house and borrow:

at public elections, his power and interest gained him the honour of a nod from my lord, and a hearty shake of the hand from the candidate. Moreover, through Sir John de Mowbray's influence, he had been placed in the commission of the peace; neither did his fortune stop there; in the following year he was appointed receiver-general for the county, and, as the crown of terrestrial glory, one of the three old and ugly daughters of Lord Bubbleton—co-heiresses of poverty—condescended to accept his hand, and spend his guineas. In short, the humble clerk had become a great man; and, having the wisdom to deport himself as a little one, he was respected by the mass, countenanced by the great, and courted by the needy.

Another general rule in the house of Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co., was, that every retiring partner should allow a portion of capital to remain at interest for a certain time, a rule which Mr. Steel had thought proper to reverse, but with which Mr. Bettison had gladly complied. To say truth, an honest man could not have done better; he not only

received interest upon the remaining capital, but there was also a sum, little short of one hundred thousand pounds, which was kept apart, and petted like a nest-egg. At the end of the first month, the interest due upon this was cast up, and added to the total ; at the end of the second month, the interest was cast again, and also the interest upon the interest added at the end of the prior month, and so on, to the end of the year. This interest upon interest will, we fear, sound very like usury to uninitiated ears, but Mr. Bettison “ was an honourable man.” At first, we confess, that we ourselves were startled, but from the inquiries subsequently made, in our character of author, we are led to believe that such doings are strictly lawful, when mutually agreed upon by the contracting parties ; at least, we can vouch for the fact : and Sir John de Mowbray’s liberality towards the man he had made, won his ready consent to the arrangement. Mr. Bettison was a favourite, and no Jew, so that the proposition, on his part, appeared by no means usurious ; and the generous baronet was glad to find that he could legally gratify one who,

though bent on retirement, still hankered after extraordinary profits.

The weak point of Sir John de Mowbray was the ambition of passing for the richest man in the city of London : he paid somewhat dearly for this flattering unction ; independently of the sums required to meet the current exigencies of the bank, he always kept a large amount positively idle, and useless to himself ; but he felt a pleasure in being able to assist his neighbours, and a pride in the knowledge of the fact, that he was always able to do so. He could, at any moment, put his hand on a hundred thousand pounds or more, and many and many a tottering house he has saved from ruin.

Mr. Steel had long had his sorrowing eye upon this unemployed capital, and, with the spirit of a man of business, he determined to put it into circulation : together with other funds, it disappeared when he departed for America.

Such was the position of affairs when Sir John de Mowbray was informed of his partner's flight : at first, it sounded like an impossibility, but a slight examination revealed the

delinquent's villany, and confirmed the report.

Sir John, thus robbed and left to himself, was obliged to turn his mind and energies to the affairs of the house ; he who had saved so many, was now in his turn compelled to ask assistance, and doomed, alas ! to find refusal where his claims were strongest. He managed, however, to meet all immediate demands, by obtaining discounts on bills which had been spared, as useless, by the scoundrel Steel. This provision being made, the next step was to examine into his actual state : the result was, that if the losses of the house could be hushed, and time gained to convert securities and property to cash, all might yet be well ; if, on the other hand, the public were alarmed, and a run upon the house ensued, there would be only the alternative of suspending payment for the present, and winding up at a sacrifice so enormous, that, though the creditors might be paid in full, Sir John de Mowbray and his son would be left pennyless, or poor, at best.

The prompt measures which had been taken, together with the long-established re-

putation of the firm, succeeded for a time in preventing doubt or panic. Sir John, with perhaps stronger decision than judgment, determined on the sale of his house in Grosvenor Square. This occasioned some whispering and wonder; the evil tongues of those who had refused assistance doubled their base ingratitude, by betraying the request; the extraordinary circumstance of Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. obtaining discounts through the Bank of England, also transpired; whispers were raised to reports, reports to actions. Then came symptoms of withdrawing certain balances, if not of an actual run upon the house.

Amidst these alarmists, the weakest and most unreasonable, was one who ought to have been the best and steadiest friend at such a crisis; it was the fitting opportunity for him who owed all to Sir John to repay his kindness. But Mr. Bettison, though an honourable man, and kind-hearted withal, was unfortunately unfitted for great and trying events; on such occasions, he lost his head, and without a head, it is inconceivable what mischief a

man may do ; battles have been lost, ere now, by one of these headless beings ; and, to descend in the scale of illustration, well we remember the lives and limbs which were lost, when one amongst the gods of Drury Lane (whose sight was obstructed by the rising curtain), cried “ Higher ! higher ! ” and some weak mortal, catching the sound imperfectly, bellowed “ Fire ! fire ! ” lost his head, and ran away. So easy it is to cause a panic, and create a run ; and whether it be on the field of battle, upon a house, or from a house, the consequences of a run are usually fatal.

Mr. Bettison was immediately informed by Sir John of what had occurred, and his support requested. By the same post, some underling clerk wrote an exaggerated report ; the ci-devant partner trembled for the nest-egg which had hatched his monthly guineafowls, as well as for the capital at simple interest. He drew for an immense sum, which, as receiver-general for the county, he declared to be indispensable. This was paid ; an interview followed, in which the baronet demon-

strated to his late partner, that he would most effectually secure his own interest, by not ruining that of his patron.

While under the immediate influence of Sir John's good and strong sense, the alarmist took courage ; and if he felt not gratitude, he saw his real interests. Having asked, and received a still further amount to confirm his resolutions, he promised to leave the remaining capital untouched for the present, and returned to his country residence.

Here, however, his temporary firmness failed, and fear once more mastered his reason ; he insisted upon having his whole capital at * once. Sir John, in reply, represented the impossibility, nay, the injustice of a step which would place the principal creditor in a better situation than that of others ; and this, too, in a house where, as partner, he made his whole fortune. He pointed out the cruelty and madness of a demand which was fraught with ruin to his patron, and danger to the creditors ; he reminded him of the solemn promise he had made upon receiving the last amount, which he himself had declared was enough to dispel

anxiety, and open his eyes to the wisdom of forbearance. In conclusion, he mentioned his determination to suspend payment, if such demand were insisted upon; in other words, to be a beggar, rather than be unjust. To this letter an answer was expected on the morrow or next day. Sir John, warned by the weakness and vacillation of the man he had to deal with, penned the letter to his son, which is already before our reader. At one time, he had hoped to conceal the tidings of misfortune until there was also the prospect of repairing the evil; such chance now appeared hopeless, and doubly so, when he felt that, day by day, his eyesight failed.

Ladies and novel-readers are, of course, about as conversant with the mysteries of banking as our hero was, when he changed his quarters from Blankisle Hall to Vine-tree Court, Lombard Street. It may, therefore, be well, for our mutual understanding, to add a few words on the subject. Don't be alarmed, dear gentles of either sex, we are not about to put you on a high stool, with four sides like ladders, crowned with fourteen inches square

of black leather worn to brown ; we are not about to defile your fingers with ink, nib a pen upon your nail, and weary your eyes by poring over a ledger heavier than a dozen folios of the fathers. No : in one page we hope to make you sufficiently learned for our purpose.

At first sight, it may appear but reasonable that if Mr. A. (not meaning an ass, thereby) intrusts fifty or a hundred thousand pounds to Mr. B., the banker, Mr. A. may, without notice, draw at once for the money thus intrusted : we hope to prove the contrary, and shew it would be most unreasonable to do so. If bankers were to put all the money intrusted to their charge into a strong room, and do nothing with it, it is clear they would not only gain nothing, but their labour and risk would be rewarded by a positive loss. Bankers are every instant employed in re-issuing fractions of sums paid into their hands. Every transaction is entered, and doubly entered, in the huge ledgers to which we have alluded. A large establishment of confidential clerks, house-rent, servants, and stationary, must all be paid for before the partners receive any remuneration for the time and

toil which they have devoted to the affairs of their—what shall we say?—"customers?"—it is such a horror of a word!—we have it—"of their confiding friends." It follows, therefore, in order to meet these expenses, and earn the fair wages of their labour, that a large portion of the money intrusted to B. B. and Co. must be sedulously planted out before a golden harvest can be reaped. In other words, they may invest it in the funds or government securities, on which interest is paid; they may oblige the merchant by advancing the amount of a long bill, and oblige themselves by charging interest upon the months and days which the bill has to run before it will be due: on the same terms, they may lend money upon estates, though this is rare with London bankers. Then again, some of Messrs. B. B. and Co's. "confiding friends" may keep a balance on the wrong side; that is, instead of confiding a thousand pounds to their banker's hands, they receive that amount into their own, upon giving security and paying five per cent for the loan. Now all this, done to oblige a confiding friend, can only be effected by a tacit agreement,

which binds every man to leave a *certain sum* in his banker's hands always *untouched*; and thus, by enabling the banker to use to advantage *a certain capital*, he pays him for the trouble of paying his cheques, and keeping his accounts. Were it necessary, we could make this more apparent, by alluding to the fact of country bankers allowing two or three per cent on money deposited for a certain time, on which, of course, they must make a larger percentage, or be losers; but without this, we trust we have made our idle readers sufficiently learned in the art of making money, to convince them, first, that every man is bound in honour to keep a certain balance always at his banker's; secondly, that if all the confiding friends join their foolish heads together, and run headlong upon the bank, they are guilty, at least, of *felo de se*, and of "maiming with intent to destroy" the poor banker; thirdly, that if Mr. Bettison should insist upon withdrawing his capital, and more particularly his nest-egg, the very most charitable construction will be, to liken him to the man who destroyed the generous goose which, day by day, produced

him a golden egg. In the next chapter, we shall probably read his decision: the present we conclude by a fervent wish that every reader may have, and keep, a good balance at his banker's—a pleasing necessity, which we have endeavoured to prove to be nothing but right, proper, and convenient, to all parties.

CHAPTER XII.

A CITY MARSHAL.

“ All my delight on deeds of armes is sett,
Without respect of richesse or reward.”

SPENSER.

THERE are some persons evidently intended by nature for specific professions. It is a thing not to be mistaken: divinity is written on the brow of one man; Mars on the front and bearing of another; law oozes from the tongue of a third; physic dwells upon the palate of a fourth; but it is not every one who finds his proper sphere, though the laws of nature are fixed, perfect, and unvariable. The lot of man seems, to our weak perceptions, to be cast at random; the ups, and downs, and jumbles of the world, are beyond our comprehension: we only know that it is so; and, while we see and feel that that station of life to which it has

pleased Providence to call us, is opposite to that for which we were palpably intended ; we must allow there is no remedy, and have only to make the best of a bad match. The word is apposite ; for, as in the cases of matrimony, how rarely can we say that he or she are wedded to this or that station, and exactly suited to each other. Some men, with thirty thousand a-year, were clearly never meant to be gentlemen—title and wealth cannot make them ; while others, with scarcely a penny in their pockets, never cease to be otherwise : their lots have been palpably miscast, but how, we know not.

Thomas Bowman, *alias* “the sergeant-at-arms,”—for thus was he styled by his fellows—a faithful and valued clerk in the house of Messrs. D’Aubigny and Co., was a striking instance, amidst the many, of such out-of-place beings. There was no looking at the man without seeing he was born for the army ; soldier was written in his features, air, and carriage ; piercing eyes, and aquiline nose, spoke of the eagle’s daring ; a spare and wiry form told of energy and endurance fitted

for the warrior's chequered life—of one intended for the smoke of gunpowder, instead of that of London.

Not all the drudgery of the desk could destroy this cast of character, or round the flattened shoulders. Still, if he drew a pen from behind his ear, he did it with as much dignified precision as if the pen were a sword, and drawn to salute his commander-in-chief. Judging from his name, and knowing how the traits of our ancestors appear in after generations, it is more than probable that the forefathers of Thomas Bowman were distinguished amongst the archers bold of merry England; though we are bound to confess, that there was neither authentic record of the yew-tree which supplied their bows, nor of their family-tree which supplied the archers. It is mere surmise, suggested by the name, and the warlike characteristics so indisputably bred within the man.

Unluckily for Mr. Bowman, he was born before phrenology, or strongly-developed bumps of pugnacity might have influenced

his parents, and made him the Wellington of his day. As it was, he became a banker's clerk ; and, while he sighed to handle a sword, a pike, or bayonet, he was compelled to limit his ambition to a quill, penknife, or pocket-book.

The clerk, however, was a man not to be overlooked. Sir John de Mowbray had been struck by his commanding mien, and noticed him with favour. When, as sometimes happened, young Melton was brought by his father to the city, Thomas Bowman was always selected to attend upon the young heir, to shew him the wonders of the strong room, let him dabble his little fingers amongst the hoards of bright guineas, or listen to the magic of Abraham Newland, whose touch could stamp the value of thousands on a bit of silver paper. The predilection of the father was thus imbibed by the son. Thomas Bowman and the little squire became the best of friends.

“ But what are these ? ” said the clerk, one day, as he scooped up a shovelful of new guineas, and poured them back with a sneer of

ineffable contempt. “ What are these to the polish of warlike steel? I hope, Master Melton, you will be a soldier.”

“ I should like it,” answered the little Melton, with the spirit of a true boy, to whom the ideas of lace, scarlet, a sword, and big horse, are irresistibly fascinating.

“ And the drums, and the fifes, and the bugles, don’t they make your little heart beat, Master Melton, don’t your ears tingle with delight?”

“ I love them dearly.”

“ That’s a man, and a brave one, and I see you’ll be a soldier,” cried Bowman, with enthusiasm, as he lifted the little hero in his arms and kissed the young proselyte. Little did he think in after years that his words might eventually come to pass.

“ Do they make lace of these guineas?” asked the innocent boy, who then knew nothing of the value of money, and thought the hoards before him would supply the whole army at least.

“ They are fit for nothing else!” cried the clerk, in the first burst of warlike spirit; and

then, recollecting himself, he condescended to explain how soldiers were paid and lace manufactured.

“ And to-morrow you’ll meet me in the park, and take me to hear the band, and tell me again all about marching, and charging, and wheeling their eyes right about.”

“ Their bodies, you mean. But, hush! Master Melton, there is Sir John, or somebody, coming;” and, as the clerk heard a foot-step approach, he was painfully recalled to the true sense of his station in life.

“ Do promise, do, pray, dear Mr. Bowman,” said the boy, who read the melancholy expression in his attendant’s face.

“ Yes, yes, to-morrow, as usual, at the Horse Guards—I promise, if possible,” replied Bowman, in a hurried tone, and then answered Sir John de Mowbray, who came to inquire for his son.

We have given this peep at a meeting which had occurred in Lombard Street many years since, as giving an insight to the character of a faithful and devoted being, who, in the midst of all his military dreams, stuck to the

desk, and honourably did his duty to Sir John instead of the king. It was the same being to whom Melton de Mowbray now looked forward as a friend and adviser; their intimacy, his kindness, and affection of former days, had never been forgotten; the observation of later days assured Melton that to him he need not fear to confess his ignorance—alas! his gross and total ignorance—on matters of business; he knew he should be instructed without being sneered at, and scorned as a fool in all things, because he could say neither multiplication nor pence-table by rote.

We need only add—and, strange though it may seem, we are, as usual, speaking but the fact—in explanation of the rendezvous appointed for the Horse Guards, that for years and years it was the custom of Thomas Bowman to attend the morning parades in St. James's Park. To do so was probably culpable; but so far his *bellimania* was irresistible; and, though wishing to hasten our sketch, we must pause to say that this slight deviation from his appointed path was the sum total of

offences which could ever be charged against this worthy man.

Day by day, when he started from the City on his western circuit, he flew like the wind until he reached the Horse Guards, the only spot where he looked and felt at home. His huge leathern pocket-book, filled with bills for acceptance or payment, was worn as a breast-plate beneath the coat, which was buttoned, *à la militaire*, up to the chin ; knee-breeches and long gaiters, which fitted close to the leg, shewed to advantage limbs as straight as his neck, and completed his invariable costume. One thing, however, we had nearly forgotten ; and as, for aught we know, it set the fashion for the present age, we must not omit a black stock, above which a narrow rim of white appeared, as if to hint there was a plain neck-cloth beneath.

We have mentioned his striking and military cast of features ; this, together with his daily appearance, made him acquainted with all the drill-sergeants of the guards.

“ Why don’t you join us ? ” they said, when

they had satisfied his thirst of knowledge as to some manœuvre.

“ Better come to us,” would cry a man like a giant, with cocked hat, jack-boots, and blue coat crossed with broad buff leather belts for sword and carbine, a specimen of the old Oxford Blues. Poor Bowman would shake his head with a sigh, think of his widowed mother who depended on his pen for support. There needed nothing to back the invitation but a sense of duty, and sense of pride kept him to the station for which nature never meant him. He had no funds to obtain a commission, to which his father’s rank would once have entitled him, and he could not desert his mother, or break her heart, by enlisting as a private. As he could not enter into particulars, his usual mode of answering such requests was to turn “ to the right about! face!” and march off. When out of sight, his double-quick time made up for the minutes he had lost.

By means of a little plotting with Sir John de Mowbray’s butler or steward, Master Melton was frequently taken to St. James’s Park; and gratified by meeting his favourite, Mr.

Bowman. A banker's clerk may appear a singular tutor for military tactics ; however, in this case, it answered perfectly ; the happy and delighted boy listened to his explanations—learnt the word of command to go through the manual—how the squares were formed, and men fired over one another's shoulders—and, in the end, he began to think what capital fun it must be to see cavalry charge, and be spitted, like geese, on their bayonets. Then, too, he got the best place for seeing and hearing the band (for Bowman, as amateur, was as well known, in his way, as the privileged pie-man, who sold “hot Banbury cakes,” was in *his* way). To crown the happiness of Master Mowbray, he was noticed by the officers ; had occasionally the delight of holding a naked sword ; and looking for the blood of the men it had killed ; and, now and then, of sitting on a war-horse with all its equipments.

Stolen pleasures, they say, are always the sweetest. These were happy moments for the enthusiastic clerk and ardent child. In the latter it was a passing passion ; and, having persuaded his father to give him a sword, gun,

cocked hat, and drum, it gradually subsided, after he had disturbed the whole house by beating to arms, broke some dozen windows, one large looking-glass, and three vases with marble bullets from his musket, and wounded two men and one maid with the point of the sword. In the former, however, it was a passion, and as much a part of himself as the sap is to the tree—it flowed in his veins—it was bred and born there. Even when a higher station in the house confined him to Lombard Street by day, his evenings were devoted to reading such works as bore upon his beloved theme. The life of Frederick the Great he knew by heart—the feats of Alexander, Hannibal, and Henry the Fourth, were at his fingers' ends—he would name every battle, and give the numbers of killed, wounded, and *hors de combat*; they came as pat as twice one are two. Thus far, at least, he had made his mania subservient to his arithmetical practice.

As this predisposition to the articles of war gave a singular turn to his mode of expression, we have thought it necessary to say thus much

to account for what might otherwise appear unnatural. In conclusion, though foreign to our purpose, we cannot but tell of Thomas Bowman's exquisite delight, when subsequently Napoleon's threatened invasion turned "the nation of shop-keepers" into an armed and warlike population. In those memorable days every clerk was compelled to turn soldier, and handle the musket or pike. Bowman was at once appointed to command—he was in his element and glory—a very giant and general amongst the City volunteers—and his morning and evening prayer was, "Oh! that the Corsican would dare to land!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE CITIZEN'S ABODE OF FORMER DAYS ; HIS
GARDEN, OR CHURCH-YARD.

" ————— Thus lived, two ages since,
The Wombwells and Politos, who to-day
Form Fashion's mixed menagerie—and then
They neither aped nobility, nor blushed
To own their honest mart—and courtly trace
Of this their noble pride may still be found
In many a street and lane—high stately rooms—
With width of stair enough to yield a pass
To Whittington's state-coach ; with all which won
The honours due alike to wealth and worth—
The Medici of London."

A. BIRD.

It is not our intention to dwell upon Melton de Mowbray's short and sombre career as a man of business ; we merely purpose to present to the reader such leading events and anecdotes as may be likely to interest or amuse ; but as

these will cover a space of time, though short in point of years, long, sad, and lingering to our hero, it may not be amiss to give a slight picture of the gloomy sojourn where his father breathed his last, and where he, a poor voluntary prisoner, lived without breathing, until he had paid every man to his uttermost farthing.

The windows of the banking-house, facing—but much too dirty to look into—Lombard Street, were divided by a low, dark passage, wide enough to admit a man who was not inordinately fat. A wrought-iron gate, worked with some skill, and representing a grim blacksmith's notion of *fleur-de-lis*, tendrils, and grapes, closed this entrance by night, and was chained back to the wall by day; a mat, blackened with the first-fruits gathered from the muddy stones, was chained to a staple in the opposite wall; and, if this hinted at the dishonest industry of some wandering citizens—if the chain on the gate betrayed the dread of city Sampsons, they also told that the passage was private, and belonging to some man of substance within—it led, in fact,

to Vine-tree Court, to the domicile in which the venerable D'Aubigny had learnt to live on smoke, and vegetate to extreme old age; and to which, in their turn, Sir John de Mowbray and his son had now retired.

People living at the West, and accustomed to St. James's—unworthy and despicable as that building is—have little notion of a court in the city; we mean one of those *cul de sacs* where every inch of ground is of so much value, that an English hop-sack would almost give the length, depth, and breadth.

To be candid, however, Vine-tree Court was rather a favourable exception; it was not possible, in its narrowest part, to stand at opposite windows and shake hands across; it was neatly paved; there was still a precision about it, which told of the departed old bachelor; the four or five steps leading to the private door, together with their landing, were daily whitewashed, to receive the daily showers of blacks; the large brass knocker and plate were regularly polished; a strip of earth, bordered by a piece of painted wood, formed a flowerless flower-bed on either side of the

door, and were monopolised by two vine-trees, which were sparingly trained on a cobwebby trellis. Poor D'Aubigny! never did the *amor patriæ* of man hit on a more melancholy device to soothe his recollections, to revive his dreams of *la belle France* and her sunny vineyards. If one thing be more wretched than another, it is to see the graceful, blushing vine struggling into life in the tainted atmosphere of London; to mark its shrivelled, puny, blackened leaves—its stunted shoots—its blossoms, with the mockery of grapes—the bone without the flesh—the withered vestige of a palsied hand;—this is, in truth, a piteous sight! Why, the pale-faced, sickly child within a factory, is merriment to this: the child can see the sun, and smile sometimes; the blanched and orbless skull had been a happier memento. Poor Yorick had had “his jibes and jests,” and they lived again in the grave-digger’s memory, as he handled the jaws which “were wont to set the table in a roar.” Nay, the sallow and coarse-clad monk at Rome, as he pointed to the skulls which formed the walls of his chapel, and said, with a smile, “*Quanto*

pane hanno mangiato," doubtless had some pleasurable recollections of a dinner ;—but the vine-tree in London is the emblem of perfect misery—of blasted hopes—of the broken heart which pines for death, yet may not die !

The rooms which faced the narrow entrance to this court had a more cheerful aspect, they looked at the back into a church-yard, or rather a bit of garden, for church there was none ; and time had levelled the tombs and mounds which had once been erected in this consecrated spot. One large elm, robed in the blackness of a mourner, monumental inscriptions and devices inserted in high crumbling walls, were amongst the few relics which told its former purposes ; of these, most were broken or defaced ; the survivors, who had inscribed the name and virtues of the dead had, in their turn, perished from the living. The ties of blood, love, and hallowed recollections, had either sunk in oblivion, or been lost in succeeding generations. No “ Old Mortality ” had come, from year to year, to retouch the record of departed names, of the tales of sorrow, praise, pride, or pomp ;

with scarcely one exception, all had found that dark equality which befits the grave.

Still the view from the bed and sitting-room which Melton Mowbray had selected, was comparatively cheerful. Though half of the burial-ground had been covered by an additional office for the bank, there was—smoke and fog permitting—room to see the skies of heaven. Moreover, the windows opened to the leads on which the late bachelor, Mr. D'Aubigny, had contrived, after the manner of the Maltese, to raise the ghost of a hanging garden. As we shall have occasion to refer to these localities, it may be well to mention that, in the centre of this flat roof was a large skylight, and immediately under this were the trap-doors leading to a subterraneous strong room, secured by double doors of iron : the remaining half of the ground was, as we have said, converted to a bit of garden, in which the last of a generation of sextons had long officiated as gardener. His office, to be sure, was somewhat changed, from the apprenticeship he had served to his father ; but when the old church was pulled down, and his ser-

vices were no longer needed in the profession he had learnt, he gladly accepted the offer of a home under the wing of the kind-hearted D'Aubigny. He clung to his humble room, his shed, his shovels, and pickaxe, like the poor man to his cottage and hearth on the site of "St. Katherine's Docks;" he hallowed the official residence attached to the mournful duties which he and his family had so long performed, as the cottager valued the spot now flooded by the Thames, swept from the face of the earth, and traversed by the proud ships of our merchants. It may be the reader, like us, has watched the formation of those huge inland basins,—like us, has marked the cottage, preserved with honest pride, from age to age, still telling of the fields which once were there,—like us, he may have seen it alone and unchanged, amidst the changes around; unmoved by the noise of busy thousands, of wagons moving like magic by the power of steam, of depths daily increasing, and buildings rising like monsters from the slimy banks of the river:—if so, the reader must have re-

marked the solitary dwelling, spared while yet it might be, and heard, as we have, how the last of an honest and humble race died broken-hearted, when driven by the almighty act of parliament from the land of his fathers. It was even thus that the old sexton loved to cling to the churchyard.

“ And after all,” he said, as he handled his spade, and was changing the features of the ground ; “ there *arn’t* so much difference neither, for flesh be but grass, and man but the flowers of the field ; and whether they holds up their head as pert as my crocus, or droops like the snowdrop, it all comes to one ; they lives, and they dies, and nothing can’t save them from that—so, a fig for the pomps and the vanities, say I.” And, so saying, he gathered together sundry fragments of marble and stone, to build an edging for his borders, while other bits were converted to sparrow-traps. And when the strong room and office encroached upon his bounds, he consoled himself by returning to his old habits of collecting the bones which were brought to light ; and,

with the philosophy of Roman monks, he fringed many a pretty circle of “candy tuft” and “Venus’s looking-glass” with the mortal remains, whose fate he compared to the flowers they enclosed.

At length, in extreme old age, the sexton-gardener was himself gathered to his fathers; and buried, at his own particular request, in the earth which his shovel had so often turned over.

This event occurred some years before Melton de Mowbray’s arrival, at which moment the garden was a wilderness, if not of sweets; for such was the richness of soil imparted by the contributions of the dead, that vegetation prospered in spite of smoke, and nearly concealed the only remaining signs of a grave.

We have but to add, that the old wall embraced three sides of the garden; and on the side facing the banking-house were built lofty warerooms, principally of wood, and which formed, of course, the backs of houses looking to another street.

Melton de Mowbray had risen early, he

awoke with the feeling of oppression on his chest ; for, as yet, his lungs had not been reconciled to the sulphureous heavy atmosphere of the city ; he opened his window for relief, and, when dressed, it was a consolation to tread the small limits of the leaden roof, and inhale an air which he fancied purer, when, by looking upwards, he could hail the heavens. Although its history was unknown, there was a something, too, of melancholy interest in the garden beneath his feet. “ It seems as if all around me were travelling to ruin and decay ! ” he said within himself, as he looked on the crumbling walls, the broken tablets, the leafless branches of wild and drooping shrubs, together with a rusty spade and pickaxe, which lay amidst the stems of withered weeds, by the side of the solitary grave.

Whether the memory of his mother—dead to the world, to him, and his father—whether the sufferings of the father he had found—the image of her, the pure and gifted being he had lost,—whether these — his own and altered fate, the final destiny of all on earth, were

brought to mind and woven in the musings to which the scene gave birth, we leave to the reader's imagination: time presses—we must to business.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAN OF FASHION'S FIRST LESSON IN ACCOUNTS, AND FAREWELL TO MOUSTACHES.

" Multiplication is vexation,
Division is as bad ;
The Rule of Three does puzzle me,
And Practice drives me mad."

Author unknown.

IN reading of the punishments of old, we have often thought what a very unpleasant sensation it must be to have one's ears nailed to a pillory; and yet, as all happiness is comparative, this would be positive delight compared to the feelings of regret, agony, and despair with which we should look upon the said ears if shorn from our head. It is easy to imagine the suffering which a young man, in the pride of health and beauty, would endure upon seeing

the nose or ears which had been cropped from his head, or the hand which had been stricken from his wrist; or, in case the illustration appear overwrought, let the reader figure the painful mortification of the noble stag, when he bends to the mirror of the lake, and sees himself for the first time since fate had robbed him of his antlers. With some such feeling did Melton de Mowbray look, first at himself, in the glass, and then on his peerless, inimitable moustaches, which lay on the dressing-table. He had, however, more than the consolation of the stag: he *knew* that they would grow again, in case he should like to escape from his prison, and purchase a commission in the army. As this thought suggested itself, his thoughts wandered to the gentler sex, and he spared a sigh for those who are too often compelled to take the vow of imprisonment till death—the wretched nun who, in the days of youth, loveliness, and passion, is deprived of her long and glossy locks—an act which typifies, but too well, the fate of one cut off from the living world. “Well, well,” said Mowbray to himself, “this need never be my fate; I

need neither turn monk nor sluggard ; and the fault will be mine if this right hand cannot win my way in the world."

Fortified with this reflection, he descended to the bank to take his first lesson from Thomas Bowman, the friend of his boyhood. It was yet early, the appointment having been made for an hour previous to the commencement of the general business of the day.

" Ah, Bowman ! good morning, my kind friend," said Mowbray, speaking with familiar ease towards an inferior whom he both liked and respected.

Thomas Bowman was standing with his back to the door, upright as a larch, the hollow of his right foot fitted into the ball of his left, his arms hanging down and hands crossed, after the fashion of a military " stand at ease." When roused from his reverie by Mowbray's voice, his hands dropped flat to his thigh, and heel was joined to heel with mechanical smartness and precision.

" What ! Bowman dreaming of the Horse Guards and our former days ?" asked Mowbray with a smile, as the eccentric being before him

had once more placed his feet “as you were!” and faced to the right about. “Did I think rightly?” he added, as he extended his hand to the old comrade whom fate had led him to rejoin.

“In truth, sir, I was thinking what a pity it was you didn’t take my advice, and turn soldier.”

“You augur well from my punctuality this morning? it is the very moment you ordered my parade,” said Mowbray, pointing to a clock on the point of striking eight.

“Ah, sir! soldiers meet to do a nobler duty than awaits those who muster here; it makes my heart sick to think about it.”

“Bowman!” said Mowbray, with something of that deep, sad, yet silver tone which had fallen on many a female ear, and never been forgotten, “we must not forget my poor father; can there be a nobler duty than to stand as a shield between a parent and the shafts of misfortune.”

“Halt there, sir!” cried Bowman, using a favourite exclamation. “You are right, sir;

for never was a more noble heart, or one more worthy to command."

" Well, then, let us to business, or, speaking in the language after your own heart, teach me the manual of those books which are piled around us."

" It's a thousand pities though," said Bowman, looking steadfastly at Mowbray's upper lip, and shaking his head; " but I never looked at your moustaches without thinking of Henry the Fourth of France. I have read that one of your ancestors was his intimate friend, and always fought in his cause;—am I right?"

" Even so," said Mowbray with a sigh, as he thought how the mighty had fallen; and then recovering, or rather forcing the lighter current of his artificial spirits, he added—" I hope, Mr. Bowman, you intend no slur upon the female escutcheon, by linking the likeness and intimacy together."

" Halt there, sir!" cried Bowman, with stern and ancient gravity. " I had rather pluck out my tongue by the roots, than be the first to allude to your poor father's case."

Mowbray started, as if a serpent had stung him. He gave one piercing glance, to see if his companion had purposely misinterpreted the allusion which he himself had made. Such thoughts had never entered the guileless head of him who had spoken as he felt. The fault was with himself, so dangerous it is to play with edged tools—to speak lightly of sin, because committed ages since—or slander those we never knew, and know not to be guilty.

“I am sorry to think I have destroyed the living picture of your favourite hero,” said Mowbray, struggling to obliterate the expression of fierceness which had clouded his features; “but you will allow that moustaches do not quite accord with the character and trade of a banker.”

“I can’t say they do, sir, to speak with common sense, and I am glad to see you have the courage to adopt the peaceful uniform of a citizen.”

“It did require courage, to say truth. When I gave my old pets their last curl on the fire, I thought they writhed with agony and

torture; they seemed to feel with the feelings of living flesh."

"Halt there, sir!" said Bowman, whose enthusiasm or romance never led his fancy astray, excepting when they touched the chord of his *bellimania*.

Having entered the office, which afforded ample materials for the novice's lesson, Thomas Bowman entered upon his duty, and explained divers of the mysteries of discounting, protesting, accepting, day-books and waste-books, bill-brokers, stock-brokers, *et id genus omne*. If this learned lecture was larded with some few military phrases, it was neither the less comprehensible, the less heavy, nor less forcible, on that account.

Up to this moment Mowbray had, for the most part, listened with silent wonderment, and, consequently, passed for a very promising pupil. When, however, they entered an office more particularly devoted to book-keeping, Mowbray took upon himself to open one of the many huge ledgers bound in Russia leather.

"Why, how is this?" cried Mowbray in astonishment, as, in turning over the leaves, he

saw—‘ Dr. John Merriman,’—‘ Dr. Thomas Bailey,’—‘ Dr. Joseph Higgins,’—‘ Dr. William Wiggins,’—and a thousand other names, to which ‘ Dr.’ was prefixed. “ Why, Bowman, it would seem as if all the Doctors in London banked with my father !”

“ Halt there, sir ! I don’t understand you,” answered Bowman, with a stare of much greater astonishment than that which his pupil had evinced.

“ Not understand ! why, don’t I read Dr. this, and Dr. that, on the head of every page ?”

“ Sir, what *do* you mean ?” asked Bowman in despair, as his eyes wandered alternately from Mowbray’s face to his finger, which continued to point to page after page.

“ Mean !” cried Mowbray, repeating the word, and half angry, “ I mean to ask you seriously whether this huge volume is devoted to physicians and divines ?”

Bowman was slow to take a joke, but a new and irresistible light had fallen on his eyes ; indulging in another stare, in which the comic strangely predominated, he asked,

as gravely as he could, “Are you really serious, sir?”

“I was never more so,” replied Mowbray, with deeper gravity.

There was no notwithstanding this. Bowman committed the first hearty laugh of which he was ever known to have been guilty; once off, there was no stopping; he laughed until his sides ached, and the tears came from the half closed eyes.

“Mr. Bowman! Mr. Thomas Bowman!” exclaimed Mowbray, astonished, yet somewhat offended.

“I—I—beg—pardon—your pardon, sir—in—in—indeed—honoured sir—I—I—am very sorry —” stammered Bowman, struggling to check the convulsions of laughter, but he could get no further than the word “sorry,” before another and continued burst of laughter obliged him to lean one elbow on the desk for support, while he applied his other hand to his aching ribs.

If, in the first instance, the clerk had thought his pupil mad or foolish, it was now

the pupil's turn to make the same estimate of his master ; seating himself on one of the high stools we have described, he folded his arms and awaited his opportunity of speaking.

" When you are a little composed, Mr. Bowman, you will, perhaps, oblige me by explaining the cause of your mirth ? " said Mowbray, as he saw the paroxysm was passing.

" Indeed, sir, I deserve the cat-o'-nine tails," said Bowman, suddenly recovering himself, and wiping away the tears which had trickled from his eyes.

" I think you have cried enough without them to-day."

" Will you forgive me, sir ? but, indeed, I first thought you were jesting ; and when I saw you look grave, had I been to be shot, I could not help laughing. And were you really in earnest ? "

" Decidedly — why not ? "

" And you didn't know that Dr. stood for debtor ? "

Mowbray nodded his confession, instead of saying such was my ignorance.

" And they really did not teach you thus

much at Eton?" asked Bowman, almost incredulous.

"The rod only taught me that Dr. stood for doctor, and that is a lesson which Dr. Lignum wrote in red ink pretty often; in future, my kind friend, I shall know how to write my 'debtor,'" said Mowbray, with a laugh, which he could not resist, though ashamed of his want of useful knowledge.

"Well, I hope you forgive me, sir?" asked Bowman, who, this time, checked the laugh he felt inclined to renew.

"With all my heart!" replied Mowbray, extending his hand, and adding, while he held it; "your lesson, Bowman, is worth a thousand of Dr. Lignum's; the impression will not pass; I never shall forget it. Come, come, pity my ignorance, and help me to redeem the time I have lost: explain these mysterious pages."

"Nothing so easy, sir," said Bowman, opening the ledger, and passing his hands right and left to flatten the pages he had opened: "Dr. Charles Parr, as you would call him, sir," pointing to the name before

them, while a slight twinkle of the eye accompanied this parenthesis, “is, on one side, made the debtor for all the payments made for him ; and, on the other, he has credit for all the monies paid into his account. These two sides are what I call the adverse parties ; and if you will just add up the rank and file, you will see which is the strongest side — just try it, sir.”

“I could not, if it were to save my life !” confessed Mowbray, with humility.

“Eh !” exclaimed Bowman, as he involuntarily opened his eyes and looked the sceptic for an instant. He saw it was a true bill ; there was no jesting ; and the next instant he added, “never mind, sir, you’ll soon learn ; there is nothing so easy.”

Having held out this encouragement, he took a pencil and piece of waste paper, and pointing with the forefinger of his right hand, he ran up one line of figures, down another, figured the result of each, and, having finished the additions on either side, he placed the lesser sum beneath the other.—“There, sir,”

he said, addressing Mowbray, who had watched with amazement the rapidity of his movements; “ now, if you will subtract the one from the other, you will see which gains the day: in accounts, the battle is always to the strongest—just try the result.”

Mowbray shook his head.

“ What, not know subtraction?”

“ Too true, Bowman.”

“ Is it possible?” said Bowman, with a sigh and, dropping the pen from his hand—“ and equations — and decimals — square-root — vulgar fractions—practice— and ——?”

“ Halt there! as you, my master, would say. To sum up the roll of my knowledge in figures, I just know how to draw a check and spend the money; in my pence-table, I just know that twelve pence make one shilling; and that twice one are two in the way of multiplication, man and wife always excepted.”

“ And that, sir, is only when one is a cipher, and which, being of no value by itself, can add to the value of the figure it is joined

to," said Bowman, without the least intention of a joke ; and, after a few minutes' hesitation, he added, " and pray, sir, the commander-in-chief, with his big wig, and all his great officers, with cocked hats and gowns, is it possible these heads of our public schools are all as—as—as ——"

" As ignorant as I am, you would ask ?" said Mowbray, as he saw by the hesitation of his present master, there was some fear of offending by speaking his thoughts.

" A something of that sort I wished to inquire."

" You need not have feared to speak out ; I, at least, have given you cause to doubt ; but, to answer your question, I will hope they have gained from others the wisdom I hope to acquire through you ; all I know is, that when I was a boy, they kept all such knowledge to themselves ; and if the tradesmen spoke truth, there were some who knew little more in accounts than how to run tick like the boys."

" Halt there, sir ! what's that ? even I never heard of that rule in arithmetic, yet it

sounds like a fraction of the word — is it difficult?"

"No — no — it is quite easy, as you say ; it is only buying without paying, the easiest of all rules ; and if 'to tick' be a fraction of arithmetic, it is far from a vulgar one, and more practised in high life than elsewhere."

"You astonish me, sir!" said Bowman, not a little horrified at the mention of such a dishonourable rule ; for he, faithful and honest creature as he was, knew nothing of the world beyond a peep at the Horse Guards, the business of a banker, and his own little library of warriors and wars.

They were now interrupted by the muster of busy clerks, and Mr. Bowman declared he must snatch a mouthful of breakfast before he took the command for the day.

"Just tell me before you go, have you a cricket-club in Moorfields?" asked Mowbray, while he detained his tutor with one hand, and pointed with the other to a large bundle of hazel rods, regularly notched as boys score their runs.

"A cricket-club, sir!" said Bowman, spurning at the idea; "why, those are tallies from his majesty's Exchequer!"

"And pray is that the plural for tally-ho? do his majesty's hounds ever come there?" asked Mowbray, with provoking gravity, while he laughed in his sleeve at Mr. Bowman's indignation.

"This time, sir, you are affecting ignorance, or aiming at quizzing my attempts to instruct you."

"Upon my word I do not understand you, and I beg you to explain," said Mowbray, in his natural tone, when he saw that the honest clerk was hurt and offended.

"Well, sir, they are what I say; that is, these sticks or rods are called tallies, and are given by government as receipts for money paid into the Exchequer."

It was now Mowbray's turn to exclaim,
"Is it possible?"

"Perfectly true, sir!"

"Well, then," said Mowbray, "I do think these rods might be better applied. I wish Dr. Lignum had to do with such wooden-

headed people; and I trust when the Whigs come in, they will do away with all such Tory tom-fooleries."

"Halt there, sir! I have great respect for good old customs," said Bowman, who was, in his day, a stiff conservative; and would have thought the country in danger if the Exchequer ceased to issue notched sticks for receipts,* lord mayors to count hob-nails, or the army to wear their long pig-tails.

Had he lived until now, he would, doubtless, have called his fears prophetic when the Houses of Lords and Commons were burnt down by firing the condemned tallies, and have dreaded lest the Court of Aldermen should set the Thames on fire, when their hob-nails are returned to the forge. We have no such fears, and rather rejoice that the country is likely to have a senate-house worthy of its high and mighty fame; but, to keep to

* "A taille, or tally, was a cleft stick, both parts of which were notched according to the sum of money advanced, and of which one part was given to the creditor, whilst the other remained with the debtor; hence the Tallier of the Exchequer, now called the Teller."—FENN's *Chronological Notes*.

our purpose, we have only to add, while Mr. Bowman evinced his respect for good old customs by eating his breakfast, Melton Mowbray sought the bedchamber of his father.

Thus ended the first day's lesson.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAYMENT SUSPENDED.

" Saving hanging, Brother Scarlett, methinks this is the worst of all suspension acts."—MONTAGU'S *Letters*.

MR. BETTISON's reply did not arrive so soon as was expected : we hasten to lay it before our readers with the least possible delay.

It was addressed to Sir John de Mowbray, Bart.; a large "private" was in the corner, and, as if to distinguish it more decidedly from letters of mere business, it was folded less like a bill than usual, and bore in red wax a flaring coat of arms, quartered with those of Lady Mary Bettison, his wife, in an escutcheon of pretence. It ran as follows, though we must presume that the habit of the clerk so far prevailed as to put the words of " Saveall Castle," the dates of the month, year, and address of

“ dear and honoured sir” so high in the page, that it seemed to be in danger of falling over the edge of the paper.

“ Yours of the 10th instant arrived in due course; and was immediately forwarded by Lady Bettison, my dear wife, who ordered a horse and groom to be saddled forthwith.

“ I was from home at the time, employed in magisterial duties, and Lord Bubbleton, my venerable father-in-law, was sitting by my side on the stool—I mean the bench—when your letter was put into my hand. My ideas are so confused that I scarcely know how to reply; my alarms, my fears, of dear Lady Mary, of being reduced to poverty, and my children, unman me for this trying occasion. Indeed, my dear sir, I do not forget how much I owe to you for the high station I hold in the world. I sincerely grieve to hear of the large liabilities incurred by your confidential partner, the runaway rascally Mr. Steel; and I could shed tears for your sad reverses, which have placed me in this trying position.

“ I allow there is sense in what you say;

but, fearing to trust my own judgment, I have in strict confidence consulted my father-in-law, Lord Bubbleton, who you know has long banked with your house. He was dreadfully shocked, and declared he should immediately draw for the small balance in your hands, and then advised me, for the sake of my wife and children, to do the same. What am I to do, my dear sir? I was afraid to confess the large sum still in your hands; I should be sorry to follow his counsel, or reject it entirely. In short, you will see by my letter of business, addressed to the house, that I have chosen a middle course, and hope to feel my mind more easy when it is attended to. Praying you to pity the dreadfully nervous agitation with which I write, and wishing you well through your difficulties,

“ I subscribe myself

“ Your humble and faithful Servant,

“ HENRY BETTISON.

“ To SIR JOHN DE MOWBRAY, BART.,

“ Banker, London.”

“ I prepared you, Melton, to expect nothing

more," said Sir John, who had listened with calm attention while his son read the letter.

"The selfish, ungrateful coward!" muttered Melton between his teeth, giving vent to the feelings excited by the perusal. "And is this the man, my father, who owes every thing to you?"

"Be calm, Melton, reproach or abuse will avail us nothing: we must act; and that, too, with firmness and decision."

"But one so deeply indebted! I can scarcely believe my eyes," said Melton, speaking in the spirit of youthful inexperience, which is slow to believe the cold and black ingratitude which besets the world.

"Melton, my son, do you forget that lesson which has touched us both, and wrecked my happiness on earth? It is not the head on which our greatest benefits are heaped, nor the heart in which we trust the most, that always proves the most worthy of our gifts. Your mother—was there a thing that I withheld, one drop of blood that I would not have shed to win her happiness?—But let it pass.

No living eye has seen me shed the tear of agony I felt—no ear has heard me utter reproaches, which, alas! if merited, could avail me nought: and if, *then*, I could command myself, shall this upstart minion awake the idle wrath of a De Mowbray? No, no, Melton, we will be calm, and act with honour, if all be sacrificed but that."

Melton took his father's hand between his own, and pressed it in silence to his lips: he could find no words to answer to the deep, stern, melancholy chord which had been struck: the little act of affection which he had tendered was, indeed, the best and only answer needed.

"I understand you, my dear Melton; and now we will proceed to act upon our decision: oblige me by seeking Bowman, and let him bring the letters of the day."

It was not many minutes before Melton, accompanied by Bowman, returned to the room. They found Sir John standing by the fire, slightly reclining against the high mantel-piece; and with calmness, ease, and dignity expressed

in every limb and feature. Melton, however, remarked a handkerchief which had fallen to the ground, instead of being returned to the pocket, and was about to restore it to his father, when he fancied that he saw the traces of tears, and desisted from his purpose.

“ Well, Bowman,” said Sir John, addressing himself to the clerk, “ any thing of importance to-day?”

“ Not much, Sir John; there is only one letter which may need your attention.”

“ From Mr. Bettison?”

“ The same, Sir John; shall I read it?”

A slight inclination of the head was the word of command, which the well-drilled Bowman obeyed by reading as follows:—

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ I see that Exchequer bills have fallen; you will therefore purchase forty thousand pounds (the latest bills you can get), and debit my account for that amount.

“ On Monday, the 18th, pay twenty thousand pounds in my name to the tax-office,

Somerset House, for which sum you will also debit my account.

“ I remain,

“ Gentlemen,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ HENRY BETTISON.

“ Messrs. D'AUBIGNY and Co.,

“ Bankers, London.”

“ P.S. Let the first halves of the Exchequer bills be remitted by to-night's post.”

“ Is that all, Bowman?” inquired the baronet.

“ Not another word, Sir John; and, with deference, I think it is more than enough, considering that Mr. Bettison knows that Steele has deserted with the strength of the house.”

“ Bowman!” said Sir John, without noticing his remark, “ you will pay no attention to that letter—leave it with me.”

“ Yes, Sir John.”

“ Has the business of the day commenced?”

“ Yes, Sir John.”

“ I'm sorry for it,” said Sir John, half aside.

Bowman stared, but said nothing.

" You must," he continued, " set apart the receipts of to-day ; they must all be returned."

" Ye-e-s, Sir John," as, despite his habits of obedience, he hesitated at a command so unusual.

" And to-morrow, Bowman, the house must stop payment."

" Sir John!" exclaimed Bowman, smartly drawing up his spare form some inches higher, like a wire which is suddenly lengthened.

" Yes, Bowman, I mean what I say ; to-day it is too late, but to-morrow the firm of Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. must suspend their payments. This letter, pointing to Mr. Bettison's on the table, compels me to the measure ; and, having thus decided, from that moment it were dishonourable to appropriate the monies paid in, or mix it with the assets of the house. Is it possible, Bowman, that you don't understand me ?"

" No, Sir John ; yes, Sir John ; oh ! yes, perfectly. But you can't mean what you say, Sir John ?" replied the astounded clerk, as he gradually recovered from the shock.

“ I do, I do, Bowman,” said Sir John, in a firm, yet melancholy tone; “ and to you, whose fidelity and zeal I have known for so many years, I intrust the painful task of imparting this intelligence to all who come on the morrow.”

“ I will obey, Sir John, but 'twill be of no use.”

“ How so ?”

“ It will never be believed, Sir John, never, never !” repeated Bowman, as he shook his head and sighed.

“ Well, at least it must be done ; and let the shutters be closed, as if there were death within the house, as soon there may be ; darkness is now but the fitting emblem of myself. I feel the coming storm, though, alas ! I may neither see nor face it : I can but abide it here, and perish. But, Bowman, for my sake, and still more for the sake of my dear son, I call on you to aid me in this hour of peril ;—you, too, will not desert me ?”

“ Desert you, Sir John, my kind, my best, and only benefactor !” exclaimed the faithful Bowman, as, touched by this appeal, he seized

the hand of his blind and helpless patron : “ never, while this hand can wield a—pen (‘ sword ’ was on his tongue)—never while I can earn an honest penny, or have a penny of the gifts you have conferred, will I desert my colours.”

“ Enough, enough—I will not doubt it,” said the baronet, suppressing his emotion with difficulty : “ were I to die to-morrow, it would be my consolation to know that my dear Melton had one by his side, honest in heart, yet experienced in the ways of the busy world.”

“ My father—my dear father,” said Melton, who hitherto had been a silent, but deeply interested listener, “ let me lead you to the sofa : ere long the film before your eyes may be removed, and sight restored ; but you must be calm, and prepare the chances of success for the coming operation. Leave to Bowman and myself to meet the storm. What say you, Bowman, we will fight the good fight, and hope to conquer in the end—shall we not ? ” he added, addressing himself to his destined comrade, and speaking as cheerfully as he could.

“ We will be true to the cause, and do our

best," answered Bowman ; and then turning to Sir John, he added—" as yet, Sir John, I have not done enough, and I feel I never can. Oh, that I had accepted your generous offer, and enlisted in the firm ! I might have stood a sentinel on that guilty deserter, Steel, and fought, with the fitting weapons, the man who now drives you to ruin without benefit to himself. He should not have touched one penny, until I bound him by agreement to be wise. He should not have suffered, neither should he have destroyed ; yes, in self-defence, I would have bound the enemy I meant to spare."

Nothing short of Melton giving a military turn to the conversation could have excited the warm-hearted and precise clerk to a speech of this length, as he paused with something like wonder at himself. Melton asked his father's permission to allow Bowman to read the private letter : this, of course, was granted.

" It appears to me," said Melton, seeing the honest clerk return the letter to the table with a sneer of contempt, as he glanced on the large red seal, " there is a marked contrast between the letter of business and that of friendship.

Mr. Bettison, if mad, has a method in his madness : I detect no vacillation, no nervous agitation, in withdrawing an additional sixty thousand pounds, in defiance of his promise to the contrary."

" Right, sir," said Bowman. " I could have fought that man, had I first been in command. I shall never forgive myself; but I felt I was not born to be a banker."

" You had honesty and honour," said Sir John, speaking kindly, " and those are the most important requisites. I do indeed wish that I had had the aid of your advice; but the die is cast; that which is done cannot be recalled: nothing remains but to await the consequences."

On the evening of that day, poor Bowman had a foretaste of the sorrowful duty to which he was appointed for the morrow. The doors of the bank being closed at the usual hour, an order was issued that every clerk should assemble, previous to departure, in an office appointed for the purpose.

Though the extent of Steel's delinquencies

was unknown to the clerks of the house, yet his flight and robbery were notorious to all. The fact of Mr. Bettison's sudden and extensive orders for payments—his desire to touch and remove even his golden nest-egg, was known to a few amongst the seniors. These facts, coupled with others—such as Lord Bubbleton's drawing for the last fraction of his slender balance, and many drawing more closely than usual—had given rise to floating whispers amongst themselves. They saw there was a something wrong—a something which marked irregularity in the hitherto boundless resources of the house; and when they met, in pursuance of the general order which they had received, they anticipated some unusual, perhaps alarming, intelligence. Many thought that Steel had been taken, and that witnesses were to be examined; but, amongst the many, not one was prepared to hear the truth.

It must have been remarked, that when striking events call people together, there is a predisposition to silence, or at the most, to discussion in an under tone. The whole popula-

tion of noisy Naples, from the Court to the Lazzeroni, have watched the creeping torrent of burning lava with breathless stillness. Is the reader so young, so happy, as never to have followed some friend to the grave? if so, indeed, he may not have observed how even those assembled for form sake speak as if their voice could awake the dead who lie in the adjoining room. Such, on the present occasion, was the silence preserved; so much so, that Bowman, who awaited their arrival in an adjoining room, neither heard their footsteps nor their tongues.

"Are we all present?" asked one of the seniors in a whisper.

Sundry inclinations of the head answered, "Yes;" and he took upon himself to enter Bowman's private room, and inform him they were in attendance. Knocking with one hand, and at the same time opening the door with the other, he surprised Bowman at his desk, both elbows buried amidst books and papers, and both hands shrouding and supporting his forehead and face. The knock had been so gentle, and the lock turned so quietly, that

neither had roused him from his fit of abstraction.

"Mr. Bowman, sir, we are all in attendance," said the clerk.

"Right, Sir John;—eh! it's you, Thompson? be with you in a moment," replied the startled Mr. Bowman; and burying himself for a moment, and rather more, amidst his papers, he appeared through the door which had been left open; and, after one or two "hems!" addressed his brother clerks nearly as follows—excepting, nevertheless, the succeeding "hems!" which filled up sundry hesitating vacuums, and which we beg the reader to supply *ad libitum*.

"Sirs, my dear friends and companions, this is the saddest roll-call I ever witnessed. Steel, you are aware, has turned out a scoundrel."

(“I told you it was so,” whispered one to another, of those who had foretold the cause of their meeting.)

“You already know he has robbed the house, deserted, and now—and now——”

"He's taken," said one.

"They've nabbed him," said another, under the cover of two or three hemis!

"And this, with other reasons, has decided Sir John de Mowbray—and I am commanded by orders issued by our chief —"

Thus far Bowman had proceeded in his usual eccentric style; thinking, probably, that the truth would be thus broken with more dignity, and his feelings more securely mastered; but a certain choking in his throat warned him that his powers of oratory were nearly at an end. Changing at once to a hurried and familiar manner, he addressed the clerks as his friends and brothers in misfortune—told them that their kind and generous master was all but ruined—that, on the morrow, the house must stop payment!

Having with these ill-omened words concluded his duty, he hastily retired to his private room, and resumed the position from which he had been disturbed.

The clerks, to do them justice, thought, in the first instance, of little but the dreadful blow which had fallen on the head of the house.

That Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. should stop—that Sir John, their beloved patron, might be driven to bankruptcy, were thoughts so astounding and overwhelming, that all else was for a time forgotten. If, ere the night was closed, when fathers looked upon their home, their wives, and children—sons upon their aged, helpless parents—if then they thought of themselves, and felt how fearfully their fate was linked with his to whom they had looked from boyhood for promotion and support, such mingled sorrow was natural—it was not unworthy of an honest heart.

On that night—that sleepless night—there was one in whose heart these lamentations were deeply echoed. Sir John de Mowbray had ever felt as a father to those who had fed from his hand: he had felt deeply—felt how truly the debt was mutual—how much he owed to those who served him with fidelity. “And those,” he said within himself, “who have built their hopes on me—who have watched me as a rock on which their beacon burned, will see the light extinguished, and the

rock itself sink and be swallowed up in misery and darkness."

As these thoughts pressed upon his mind, he sought the surest refuge in the hour of trouble, and prayed to the Father in heaven to have mercy on those whom he could no longer succour. Ah! how little does the heartless world think of the details of suffering and wo, when they glance at the outline of misfortune! The titled, whose honours are gazetted—the soldier, who reads his promotion;—how little do they heed the varied tale that the same gazette could tell—the annals of the broken-hearted bankrupt—of the branches which perish with the stem!

If Melton de Mowbray, a stranger to those within his father's house, were less alive to the painful reflections which kept Sir John awake, he had his trials on the morrow. Like Bowman, he was at his post, to answer for himself and helpless parent.

Poor Bowman! he blushed like a boy of fifteen when the first check was presented for payment, and he had to say, "The house has stopped!" he blushed as if misfortune were a crime, and he himself the first of criminals.

The news spread like lightning ; and, when we say that, had St. Paul's stopped—meaning thereby its clock—it would have caused much less sensation ; some thousands upon thousands would, in the course of the day, have stared and thought it possible : but, had the mighty dome, the pile itself, fallen and crumbled into dust, it would scarcely have occasioned such astonishment as fame reported, with her countless tongues, “ Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co. have suspended payment ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEETING OF CREDITORS.

Dramatis Personæ.

MR. GABLE, *a briefless barrister.*

MR. WILLAIN, *a cunning accountant.*

MR. WILLIAN MINIMUS, *a budding lawyer, brother to the above.*

MR. BETTISON, *a country squire, ci-devant banker.*

MR. SAVAGE, *a working jeweller.*

MR. BLUSTER, *an ironmonger, a Radical of his day.*

MR. PLASTIC, *attorney to Messrs. D'Aubigny and Co.*

SIR LAUNCELOT CAPPULET, *a barrister, an old friend of Sir John de Mowbray.*

MR. BOWMAN, *an honest clerk, alias "the sergeant-at-arms."*

MR. MELTON DE MOWBRAY, *the victim.*

THE above were a few amongst the many who assembled at the chambers of Sir Launcelot Cappulet, some few days after the suspension was announced. The *corps de ballet* who, also, danced attendance, would, though no ladies were admitted, fill up a chapter; but, as the

names which we have given embrace the extremes of good, evil, great, and little, they will be sufficient for the first act of our tragedy.

The scene may be imagined in Lincoln's Inn; the room large, but low, in every sense of the word, being on the first floor, down one pair of stairs; or, in the language of the vulgar, looking on the walls of the area, which gave admittance to the den of business of the celebrated barrister, Sir Launcelot Cappulet. If the situation startled the uninitiated Melton de Mowbray, it also gave an appropriate hint that he was doomed to go down in the world, and that the kindest friends are not always to be found in the highest station.

A few words upon such of the characters as are strange to the reader. We have said that their names have been given as comprising extremes, not altogether for their worth, but, as the busy gadfly can madden the mighty bull, and yet escape his vengeance, so, in our contact with the world, there are creatures—little, despicable in themselves, yet able to drive us almost mad ere we can brush them off, or crush their insignificance. At the

head of such was Mr. Gabble, barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple.

“Gabble” is an unfortunate name for a man who is a goose, more particularly when that man is bred to the bar; such, however, was the name and profession of this very little creditor, his claim amounting to something less than two hundred pounds: of his person we say nothing — *il ne vaut pas la peine*.

Mr. Willain, accountant, was a creature of another calibre, though quite as gaddish, and somewhat more wicked in his ways. He was a creditor to a large amount; for, having professionally a constant supply of money in his hands which belonged to others, he was able to gratify his pride of passing for a great man by keeping a large balance with his banker. This man’s name was, also, unfortunate, especially in the haunts of cockneyism; where, owing to a common, but vulgar error, he was frequently addressed as Mr. *Villain*. This sleight of tongue, which changed the W into V, was awkward and distressing, the more so as he passed for an excessively shrewd man, if nothing worse. None, how-

ever, are totally bad; and he possessed, at least, the merit of brotherly affection.

Willain, the youngest of a host of brothers, was one of those limbs of the law who live by trampling and squeezing to death such of their fellow-creatures as have fallen by misfortune; and to this brother Mr. Willain, the elder, furnished the ample means of such existence. When employed to arrange a bankrupt's accounts, he immediately raked together every overdue bill or bond; and, placing them in his brother's hands, he was wont to say with an indescribable chuckle of the eye, "I think, brother, we can make something out of these." On what terms this brotherly compact was made, or how far they were mutually benefited, we know not; but this we know, that the expression was so often repeated and overheard, that it passed into a byword; and the accountant was often twitted, if not convicted, by the words out of his own mouth. It is but fair to add, that, from the arrests and actions immediately commenced, a something was, doubtless, squeezed from the poor into the pockets of their tormentors, and, now and

then, to the benefit of the bankrupt's estate. But the gripe of the law, though fatal as the bowstring on whomsoever it presses, is slow to make any return ; the harvest is deferred till they for whom the seed was sown, perish or despair ; and the day of reckoning with a lengthened lawsuit is one of darkness and mystery. This man is worth a sketch : he was tall, thin, pale—and with eyes so large and prominent, that they looked as if they could look through a guinea, though they shrunk from the gaze of an honest man ; colour he had none, excepting from the pimples which blossomed on his forehead and cheeks, and which, it must be owned, exhibited a rainbow variety, according to their various stages of maturity. His brother was fat, dumpy, unctuous, very young, and always wore spectacles—a bad and suspicious sign in youth—it is a veil upon the index of the mind.

As to such of the other characters which now make their first appearance, they need no introduction, and will speak for themselves in due time ; we must, however, make an exception in favour of the kind-hearted bar-

rister, in whose chambers the meeting had been convened.

Sir Launcelot Cappulet was a thin, spare man, who drank nothing but water, and lived upon cold bacon ; but even this chilling regimen, pursued for years, could not quench the enthusiastic fire which sparkled from the eye of genius. He had still the remains of that beauty with which he was pre-eminently gifted in his younger days. Were we writing a romance, instead of the dark realities of life, what a beautiful volume might be shadowed from the wild, yet godlike visions of those his young and dreaming days ! With woman he was restless — worshipped ; they hung upon his honeyed words, and listened, as it were, to a tone of melody which they feared to break by speaking themselves — a victory more mighty than that of Orpheus, who taught the oaks and elms to dance, yet never, that we heard of, put silence on the tongue of woman. But we said no ladies were admitted, so forgive us this digression, and may we atone by connecting it with one fact to the purpose — that this honeyed eloquence, this winning power of

speech, was subsequently applied to the services of the law.

Genius, like the butterfly, is fickle and erratic; now fixing on some treasure in the East, and anon the wings are ordered, and it is “off to the West” in search of others; one while it basks on earth, and sucks the nectar of its flowers, and then again it meets the sunny rays and soars to heaven. In some sort, such was the restless and unsettled mind of Sir Launcelot Cappulet when young; gifted with a thousand fascinations, but never likely to settle on the summit of one given pinnacle. If, however, he could not make a great man, he idolised the greatness of others; if, within himself, there were not originality or depth, he loved it when he found it. In literature, he wandered in the regions of departed fancy, culled created wonders, and was content without creating; he turned the pages of the dead, and gathered the sweets which time had buried; his touch revived them, and sent them forth in all the freshness of their native beauty. If, in the language of his brothers, he was not a good lawyer, he was a better thing — he was

a just and kind one ; his voice was raised against our bloody codes, which panted like a tiger for the punishment of death, and slaked its fevered thirst on human gore ; he cried for mercy on the sins of erring man, and his country heard *the cause he pleaded without a fee !* If not a wise man, in the worldly sense of the word, he was a good man, and that again is a better, if less profitable, thing ; his heart yearned towards his fellow-creatures ; he would, had it been possible, have blessed and wrought the happiness of all ; and if he could not fulfil all the kind promises which his heart meant, and his mouth uttered, life is too short to do half which the best resolve upon ; and, had he been stuck with hands like the porcupine with quills, his means must have beggared his wishes. Some men are all talk, and nothing more ; if Sir Launcelot talked much, he also practised what he could.

We have dwelt upon his character, because he lived and died as a being apart from the “herd he loved.” To meet him in the haunts of selfish mammon-making man, was like

verdure, and a well in the desert—the very sight was refreshing. Most lawyers in practice read but their briefs; they breathe but the atmosphere of law; Sir Launcelot, however, found time for nobler studies. “The life of man,” he was wont to say, “must be measured by the hours he has lost in idleness or sleep.” By this standard, verily, his life was long in proportion to his years; he laboured late in his vocation, and rose with the lark; his earliest hours were devoted to divines, philosophers, and poets; their thoughts, their sublime and pure imaginings, fell upon his soul like the morning dew of heaven, and as the day-spring from on high, guided his feet in peace, and gave him light amidst the darkness of the grosser world. Poor Sir Launcelot! deeply did the gifted being who aided thy nobler studies, who moved, as thou wert wont, alone in the orbit of her sex—deeply did she mourn thy irreparable loss, and blessed the hour which set her soul at liberty to join thee in a brighter sphere. But, as aforesaid, no females were to be admitted, so, to business and matter of a sterner cast.

Sir Launcelot was well known to the commercial world, from having written a book expressly devoted to its interests. There is nothing like writing a book on one point when the population is dense, and the subject admits of division. The medical world begin to find this; and, ere long, we shall have a surgeon express for every joint, a physician for every ache, each being an author in his way, and able to quote chapter and verse to the point. The genius of Sir Launcelot saw this years ago, and reaped the benefit. If, in the hard-headed criticism of his brothers, the book was not a good one, it answered the purpose; and, in the easier judgment of men of business, it was an excellent work; the author was sought and inundated by the fees of the citizens. This brings us to the meeting, and shews why he was the most useful of friends to a man in Sir John de Mowbray's situation: and last, not least, it proves the value of that time which was gratuitously given, and the kindness of the man who could say, “Come, Mowbray, when you will, and consult me as a father.”

" Well, gentlemen, are you all assembled ?" inquired Sir Launcelot, arising from a low-elbowed and high-backed chair ; and adding to the pyramids of papers by which he was surrounded, the brief on which his attention had been fixed in the midst of bustle and arrivals.

" I think, Sir Launcelot, we have all that we are likely to muster," said Bowman, as he glanced at the well-known faces which were ranked around ; and, pulling from a green bag a bundle of letters from half the nobility in London, he explained that " lord this," and " lord that," had expressed their confidence in Sir John de Mowbray's honour ; and that, while they lamented his misfortune, they were prepared to accede to any terms which should be proposed for his benefit.

" And what's nobility to us ?" said Mr. Bluster, with stentorian lungs ; " them sort of people don't work for their bread, or they wouldn't be so easy about losing their money : the people finds them in that for nothing."

" You're right there—that's true enough !"

said some half-dozen at once.

"In my opinion, an act of bankruptcy has already been committed," cackled the goose, Gabble, while others were speaking.

"Halt there, sir!" cried Bowman, who heard him; "pray what do you mean?"

"Mean, sir, why I called at eight the day after the stoppage; and both Sir John and Mr. Melton de Mowbray denied themselves, and the law constitutes that to be an act!"

"Halt there, sir, if you please!" said Bowman, with anger: "it was nothing but an act of necessity; my honoured master is too blind to see any one, and too ill to be seen; Mr. Melton was with his father, and, as bankers never open until nine, we did not expect that any *gentleman* would disturb him."

Gabble did not understand this appeal to the gentleman, and cackled something about the goodness of his own opinion, which, however, was lost in the confusion of many tongues.

"Before we proceed further," said Mr. Bluster, in a voice above the others, "let me ask you, Mr. Bettison, if you ben't a tax-gatherer?"

"Sir!" cried Mr. Bettison, bristling up with all the dignity he could command.

"No offence, I hope, sir!" said Mr. Bluster, with a smile and a nudge for his neighbour, for he was at bottom the reverse of ill-tempered: "pray, sir, don't you collect the taxes for the county?"

"I am the receiver-general for the county of Wiltshire!"

"So I thought; and what's that but a wholesale tax-gatherer? So much the worse; the more gold as slips through the fingers, the more dust sticks to them."

"I don't understand you, sir," said Mr. Bettison.

"I knows what I'm about," continued Bluster: "before I agrees to any thing, let me ask, do you, as tax-gatherer—I beg pardon, as receiver of taxes—do you mean to put in a government extent, and sweep all away before we can cry snacks?"

"What do you mean?" asked one.

"Has he the power to do so?" asked another.

"Yes, to be sure!" answered many.

" Better be a bankrupt," suggested some voice.

" I think the act is committed," again cackled Gabble.

While others said one thing, and others another, each for himself, and scarcely allowing Mr. Bettison the opportunity of assuring the creditors that he had no intention of issuing a government extent, as he had no taxes in hand, " That's a wonder, too," cried Mr. Bluster, with a sly laugh, which was answered by remarks and comments from one and another.

While this first ebullition of sore and evil feeling was finding vent, Sir Launcelot resumed his brief as he stood by the fire; experience had taught him, that after the storm comes a calm. He now thought it was the fitting time for himself to speak, and, rolling up the brief, which was luckily a short one, into the form of a baton, he raised it in his right hand as if to command silence; and, with a smile and a voice, whose silver tones might have lulled the angry waves, he addressed the creditors. His words were little

in themselves, though, perhaps, well suited ; but, as we have endeavoured to explain, there was an expression in his eyes, a smile and sweetness on his lips, a melody in his tone, which charmed, and often conquered where it could not convince.

“ One at a time, if you please, gentlemen,” he said, with an arch look, as he waved his baton from left to right ; and then, pointing to Bowman, whose eccentricity was well known, he added, “ as our worthy and faithful friend would say, attention !”

The word of command acted like magic, silence was obtained. They who were lucky enough to find seats, sat ; they who could not, continued on their legs, but prepared to listen.

“ I am delighted,” continued Sir Launcelot, “ to see so many of my friends amongst you, for it leads me to build upon that kindness of feeling to which I can bear the testimony of years.”

Here some of “ the friends ” put their hands into their pockets and fumbled over their guineas, while they thought of the fees they had paid, or were yet likely to pay.

"Sir John de Mowbray has, also, been my friend from boyhood; and a more honourable, a kinder, or better man, never attained to wealth or honours by his industry; never was a brother-citizen more worthy of your sympathy in the day of trouble."

"I won't sign nothing never the more for that," said Mr. Savage, half aloud, and whispered the same advice to his neighbours.

"In my opinion ——" said Mr. Gabble, who always put in a foolish word when he saw the least opening.

"Let me ask one question ——" cried one, without waiting for the proffered opinion.

"Just tell us ——" cried others of the many, who, on these occasions, are all dying to speak at once.

"I pray you, silence, gentlemen!" said Sir Launcelot, preserving his temper in defiance of these interruptions; "as I said before, one at a time, if you please, gentlemen; a dozen clocks may be correct, as doubtless you all are, but if they all strike at once, who can count the hour?"

"I am sure, gentlemen, you will allow

the force of that," said the attorney, Plastic, with a sweet puritanical smile, as he stood near Sir Launcelot, with a large roll of parchment under his arm : many did so, and smiled at their noisy folly.

" And if," continued Sir Launcelot, without noticing his second, " you will but hear *me* first, and that, too, but for a few minutes, I venture to prophesy we shall get on like clock-work, and that all will be wound up to your satisfaction. I am aware it is my province to persuade, rather than to regulate, your movements ; but I feel that little persuasion will be necessary, when I assure you that, with trifling forbearance on your part, every man will receive twenty shillings in the pound."

" D—n it, that's to the point!" cried Mr. Bluster, who could not restrain his satisfaction.

" Hear, hear!" cried a city M.P., proud of the language of the house.

The faces of most brightened up ; but, with the perversity of human nature, many who came prepared to jump at the certainty of fifteen

shillings in the pound, now began to ask how long they were to be kept out of their money, how they were to get it, and so forth.

"A few words will explain," said Sir Launcelot; "we have prepared a deed of trust."

At these words Plastic advanced a step, held out his arm, and unfolded the parchment with all the dignity of a dumb show. "To this I shall beg you to set your hands; and the partners, thus secured from arrest, will be able to collect the assets of the house with equal justice to all."

"If the partners sign that deed, it will be an act of bankruptcy," cried Mr. Gabble, who always sought to parade his little learning in the law.

"Indeed, brother Gabble!" replied Sir Launcelot, "we will find a remedy for that; they need not sign until all the creditors have done so."

"I must take it to my chambers and read it, before I give my opinion," persisted Mr. Gabble.

"First, let us hear it, and give our opinion,"

said a merchant, who was seconded by many others.

The deed was accordingly read, approved, and signed by nearly all present.

"Mr. Savage," exclaimed Sir Launcelot, "I hope you will follow the good example of others, and sign the deed?"

"I won't do no such thing," was the surly reply.

"May I beg to inquire your reasons?"

"Why, because I never meant to do it when I came here."

"Then you might as well have staid away," said Mr. Bluster, half aside.

"That appears but a singular reason; do let me hear your objections, and try to remove them," said Sir Launcelot, with his most persuasive tone.

"Why then, I won't; because I know Sir John always did as I'm doing, and made the best bargain he could for himself; he once got sixpence in the pound more than I did, and his pride will be the better for being pulled down a bit: he once met me and Mrs. S. at Tun-

bridge Wells, and wouldn't speak to his customer, and I havn't forgotten that yet."

" Let us hope it is at least forgiven," said Sir Launcelot ; still trying to propitiate the man. " Sir John de Mowbray is at this moment all but dead to the world ; and his son, my young friend on my left, has never offended——"

" That's nothing to me ; I won't sign, and never meant to sign ; and I only came to see how the proud old gentleman would hold up his head nowadays." So saying, Mr. Savage left the room ; planning, in his malignant mind, how he could best revenge the imagined slight which he had received years ago from Sir John, whilst surrounded by lords, ladies, and " big folks."

Had such a man been capable of feeling reproof, he would have blushed at the scornful looks which fell upon him, ere he turned to the door, and have sunk to the earth, beneath the contemptuous flash of anger which shot from the eyes of Sir Launcelot. This expression came, and passed like lightning : ere the

door closed, his kindlier feelings had returned, and he said, within himself, “ Poor miserable man! what wretchedness to himself and others may that creature work !”

It was not long before the signatures of all others were obtained, with the exception of the briefless barrister.

“ Come, come, brother Gabble,” said Sir Launcelot, with a smile; “ you need not fear to sign.”

“ It is utterly impossible, until I have perused the deed,” replied Mr. Gabble, with as much pomp as a goose could command.

“ Why, you have heard it already; mere loss of your time,” suggested one.

“ That will be no great loss,” whispered another.

“ And pray, brother Gabble,” asked Sir Launcelot, when he saw no argument would prevail; “ what, let me ask, is the amount of your claim ?”

“ One hundred and eighty pounds nineteen shillings and threepence !”

A look of astonishment passed amongst the many who claimed thousands, and had signed

without hesitation ; and Sir Launcelot declared, that though his many children made him poor, he would pay Mr. Gabble at once, and take the debt upon himself, since Messrs. D'Aubigny could shew preference to none.

This made even Mr. Gabble blush ; the offer was, however, refused.

“ That cannot be,” he said, with some confusion ; “ for, to say truth, the money is not my own, and my ward is not of age ; and, in my opinion, the law”—

“ Well—well—brother Gabble, take the deed to your chambers, and let us have your opinion in writing.”

“ Allow me to make one declaration,” said Gabble, as he stood prepared to depart with the deed under his arm : “ Whether I sign it or not, I give you my word and honour, that I will take no measures against the honourable firm.”

Hitherto, Melton de Mowbray had kept to the vow he had made of maintaining a silence becoming the victim : it may, however, be easily imagined, how difficult was the task ; how often his blood had boiled with silent

indignation ; but when he heard this gracious climax of Mr. Gabble, barrister of law, &c. &c., his feelings boiled over, and, with one of those bitter, cutting tones of irony, which, in happier days, had so often cauterized the meanness of the great, he looked through his mighty creditor, and said, “The word of a *gentleman* is worth more than his signature.” These few words were followed by a slight bow ; but the look and emphasis which accompanied the title of “gentleman,” left no doubt of the sense in which it was used.

Mr. Gabble himself was the first to interpret it aright, and he slunk away, as if he felt how lowly he had demeaned the rank and profession to which he had aspired.

To have done with this little man’s littleness, we have but to add that, at the end of a week, the deed was returned, with the addenda of his red ink interlineations from beginning to end ; and, to crown all, his objections were summed up with a refusal to sign, as he had some doubts whether his own improvements had made the deed complete. Others, and sensible men, too, were, for once, of his opi-

nion ; and they neither adopted his suggestions, nor troubled him any more on the subject. Good humour was now the prevailing sentiment, and many a kind and flattering wish was expressed on behalf of our hero. The creditors were about to separate, when Mr. Willain, the younger, suggested the necessity of an accomptant, and proposed his brother ; this was seconded by others prepared for the occasion, who thought five hundred per annum would not be too much for his valuable services.

“ *Mr. Villain,*” said Mr. Bluster, committing a vulgar error (it might be on purpose) —

“ My name is—Willain,” cried the accomptant, with asperity.

“ Well, sir, “ Willain,” or “ Villain,” all one to them who knows you ; I say no accomptant’s necessary : as there are honest clerks in the house, and plenty of them, it will be more charity to retain them for a time.”

“ I honour your feeling,” said the kind-hearted Sir Launcelot ; but, alas ! he had no voice on the subject. Mr. Willain, moreover,

was a large creditor ; had signed the first, had the means of obliging many present, not excepting Sir Launcelot himself ; the appointment and salary were consequently voted by a large majority. Men are ever prone to be liberal with another's money ; especially so when there are assets to pay, first, the lawyers, and, secondly, themselves.

When, with the exception of Melton de Mowbray and Bowman, the chambers were cleared, Sir Launcelet took the former by the hand, complimented him on his courage and forbearance, and cheered him with all the kindness of a father for his son ; but when, professionally callous to the term of "bankruptcy," he urged that measure as the wisest step, in case men, like "the Savage," continued hostile, Melton de Mowbray recoiled from the thought, as, in days gone by, the honest labourer would have shuddered at the thoughts of the workhouse.

"No, no!" he said ; "any indignity but that. Why seek the cloak of the law ? why let its harpies pounce upon that which I shall gather to divide and pay where it is due ?"

" My dear Melton," said the more experienced barrister, " remember you are subject to arrest by those who will not sign."

" Impossible! When they see me slaving to be honest, with no wish but to pay them the uttermost farthing, they would not be so heartless and unjust."

" We will hope so, at least," said Sir Launcelot, again taking Mowbray by the hand, as he added, in a mournful tone, " but you know not how base a thing a man can sometimes be."

Our next chapter will, probably, afford this proof; to conclude this we must mention, that when Melton de Mowbray ascended the area steps, he saw a flashy-looking carriage at the edge of the pavement, with a coronet and profusion of plaiting on the harness of the horses, and a coachman decked with a cockade, much scarlet, and narrow gold lace.

" Mr. Melton de Mowbray, sir," cried Mr. Willain, the elder, as he thrust his pimply face from the window,— " happy to give you a seat in my carriage."

"I feel flattered by the offer ; but prefer the arm of Mr. Bowman," answered Melton, proudly, as he shrunk from the well-matched vulgarity of the accomptant and his carriage.

"Eh ! a seat for Bowman, too, sir, if you like to ride with your clerk. Coachman, *git* down and *open* the door," added Mr. Willain, whose purse-proud and familiar impertinence was unabashable.

"We prefer walking," said Melton, with distant hauteur ; and was turning to depart, when Mr. Willain craned from the carriage-window, like a turkey-cock's neck from a coop, and said, in a voice of discord,—

"Bowman ! Bowman ! Mr. De Mowbray stop a minute — shall visit the shop to-morrow — put your accounts square ; and, tell me, plenty overdue bonds and bills, eh ? — ay, thought so : put those into my hands — fetch them to-morrow."

"Halt there, sir !" cried Bowman.

"What do you mean ? — we shall be able to make something of them," said the accomptant ; and he gave a sly pinch on his brother's arm, as he used his favourite words.

"I tell you what, Mr. *Villain*—Willain, I beg pardon, sir," said Bowman, correcting himself, "though I am but a clerk, I am honoured with the trust of a partner; and, I tell you candidly, you won't touch the bills: for, if you can make something of them, I know we can make something more. Good day, sir; the clerk is much obliged for the ride you offered—good day, sir."

"Well, well, good day—we'll see to that—good day. Bowman, you're a clever fellow," said Mr. Willain, with an attempted laugh, as he drew in his head, and felt for once the shadow of shame.

Melton de Mowbray smiled at the happy hit which his faithful "serjeant-at-arms," had made; and, leaning on his arm, he suffered himself to be guided through the unknown mazes of the city, while he pondered on his present fate, dreamt of his future destiny, and thought, with many a sigh, of her whose lock of hair lay, like an amulet, against his sorrowing heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARREST.

“ The mother may forget her child,
The child its hour of play ;
But never can the record pass
Of that undying day.”

A. BIRD.

ENOUGH of business. When, without the permission of his majesty, the civic king, we introduced our gentle readers through his Temple gates, we promised they should not be made *attachés* to a city court, and stuck, like clerks, to the stool, the desk, and the ledger.

The months of Melton de Mowbray’s career as a man of business will, at least to the reader, be shortly told ; and the irksome details of his new and arduous duties shall not be told at all — let them be imagined.

If any thing were wanting to prove the fleeting changes of the world in which we breathe our span, we should point to the world of fashion — we should tax the memory of those who have watched this hot-bed of society, and seen how its brightest offspring has sprung up, blossomed, perished in a day, and passed from the memory of man.

Marriage, misfortune, the prison, or the grave, it matters not which, either or any thing which withdraws the bright stars of fashion from their dazzling sphere, makes them as dead and forgotten to those who remain to sport their wings one other hour — dead and unknown to those who rise on the morrow, and the morrow, to perpetuate the kingdom of ephemerals.

The spring returned, parliament met, shutters and the season opened ; carriages and knockers rattled, the grass withered beneath the ceaseless din of wheels — all was life, bustle, confusion, and delight. London was full ; and Melton de Mowbray, absent and forgotten — forgotten by all except a few, a very few. His absence had, like the births, deaths,

and marriages, furnished the quota for a seven days' talk. The sale of Sir John de Mowbray's collection of paintings, books, and furniture, had proved an exquisite treat, a charming lounge for the opening season; and, as to the objects of *virtù*, the unrivalled china, and the cabinets of curiosities and gems; the young and heedless were in ecstasies, and all the old dowagers in arms, to possess them.

"Oh, it is such a love!" cried one, taking up some *bijou*. "*Couête qui couête*, I'll have it; for years I have longed to possess it, but never dreamt of such good fortune."

"With this," said another, handling some object of her envy, "my rooms will be complete. Poor, dear Sir John! how glad I am he has decided upon selling all his things! It was really very honourable—I am so glad!"

And thus, while some "of all the world" were viewing things they never meant to purchase, others measuring things they wanted, others thinking where they could put the things they wanted not; in short, until the

last lot was put up and knocked down, the name of De Mowbray was faintly remembered through the medium of printed catalogues ; and, by the time the house was re-opened by the Marchioness of Newman, her name eclipsed all recollections of its former possessor as wholly as it did that of her loving lord and master.

But we must make one of the few exceptions ; we are fain to hope that, in our humble efforts to paint the world, and draw to the life the main-springs of the human heart, we have excited some interest in the welfare of our principal characters. Avoiding, as much as may be, the mere pounds, shillings, and pence of life, which, from the beggar to the prince, is a wearisome necessity, we shall follow our hero in his reverses ; and, through the medium of a few chapters, present him, at intervals, during his banishment to Vintree Court.

Have we a reader so heartless as to say us nay ? — is there one who will refuse to accompany our visits, or, presented with the means

of vision which our pages offer, shrink from looking in upon the wretched? We will not believe it: for, in all ages, and all places, the human heart is the same; and whenever and wherever its trials are heard, a sympathy, or interest, or, at the least, a curiosity, is echoed in the bosom of even the happiest and most unthinking.

It is not our intention, but we could multiply our proofs to shew how the same passions which degrade or dignify the man in high life, are to be found in the man of business. It matters little whether the titled gambler cheats and robs his equals in the haunts of fashion, whether the duke upon the turf wins by bribery or poison, or whether the tradesman deceives by double-dealing or dishonesty—gold, the all-corrupting Mammon, is the tempter in either case, the want of principle is the same in each; and if, in our preceding chapter, self may have shewn its hateful form more bluntly than in the circles of the great, it is not, though less apparent, the less constantly at work in dowagers, who

drive a polished bargain for their daughters ; or in courtiers, who seek their ends by cringing, with a graceful bow, and sacrificing their honour with the eloquence of tongue.

If in high life there are noble instances of great and good ; so, also, in the city we could cite instance upon instance, from the highest merchant to the lowliest tradesman. If Melton de Mowbray found amongst his brother bankers many who, like brutes which prey upon their wounded fellows, flocked to him with the greediness of vultures—if many whom he had marked in the world as worshippers of rank, now humbly, but unfeelingly, asked an introduction to a customer ; he, also, could name others, unknown to the world of fashion, and yet too proud in their honest aristocracy to ask the highest in the land to sign their cheques—if he could name proud and puffed-up knights and baronets who bent to butchers, bakers, tailors, and sued their patronage ; he could also write, in letters of gold, the names of one or more who, with feelings of humanity, offered to retain the ac-

count of his creditors, and restore them, if the house of D'Aubigny and Co. continued in the list of bankers.

This last and short insight into the busy world, may, we fear, be deemed a little tedious, but it was almost necessary to account for the somewhat unpolished meeting of creditors which we endeavoured to sketch ; and to those who take an interest in the ways and means of the world, it may be somewhat amusing to peep behind the scenes. Thousands are probably as ignorant as Melton de Mowbray was at this his initiation, and will be surprised to learn that almost every shopkeeper honours some banker with his account ; and in these days, particularly in the city, they bear a large proportion to the nobility. Which latter fact brings us to the main object of this digression (if such it can be called), and explains why the meeting in Sir Launcelot's chambers was not more fashionably attended, and why, amidst the many who, from infancy, had been trained to traffic and gain in a small way, there were some difficult to manage, others impracticable, and a few

only too happy to trample upon the patrician-looking Melton de Mowbray, or revenge in the son the hatred conceived against the father.

The day and hour had been fixed for the operation of couching, and Sir John de Mowbray counted the moments with impatience until the time arrived. Blindness to him had appeared as the paralysis of life, and he looked to the restoration of sight as the means of quickening the vigour and powers which he felt to be but dormant. The fountain of light was to be to him like the fabled waters which restore the strength and promise of youth. Could he but see, and resume the active part to which in mind and body he still felt equal, he imagined that all would go well, and Melton be persuaded to continue the concerns which he hoped to arrange and re-establish as firmly as ever.

These hopes were natural, and not altogether unfounded ; Sir John, though no longer a young man, was still in the strength of life. With the exception of that mental blow which had destroyed his domestic happiness, he had

never known a day's illness ; and hundreds of his friends had testified their friendship and confidence by refusing to withdraw their accounts until his affairs were arranged.

" Melton, my dear Melton ! it surely must be the appointed hour ; give me my repeater," said the anxious baronet, as if to assure himself that his son's affection did not cheat him into patience. Melton obeyed, while he told his father that it still wanted twenty minutes to the time.

The surgeon, accompanied by his two attendants, anticipated the hour, and was welcomed like one who came prepared to bestow the blessing of life, and realise the visions of hope. The preparations were quickly arranged ; a chair was placed opposite to a window which looked into the garden churchyard ; the case of instruments was opened ; the sponge, lint, and bandages were at hand ; the heavens were blue, the sun was bright, the cheering brilliancy of spring appeared for once to have touched the blackened heart of the city. Sir John felt the warmth of those rays which, in a few minutes, he hoped to see.

What force have trifles in our anxious moments! Both father and son, in silence, owned the influence of chance; their hopes, like the simple floweret, the poor man's weather-glass, expanded with the smile from the source of light.

"Lead me to the chair," said Sir John to his son; and, as he felt that he was about to withdraw his hand, he added, "Melton, you would not leave me?"

A slight pressure from the somewhat tremulous hand of the son assured the father that his wishes should be complied with.

Melton had, indeed, intended to turn aside, if not quit the room: there are few trials which tax the strength of nerve more severely than to be a passive spectator of those we love and see beneath the surgeon's knife.

"It is my father's wish," was the first thought which led him to obey; that he might chance to be of use, was what he endeavoured to think while he retained his position.

It is, we believe, asserted, that the inner surface of the eyelid is more sensitive than the

pupil itself: whether it be so or not, we have only to say that neither Sir John de Mowbray's pulse, his breathing, or muscles, betrayed the sense of suffering when the knife was applied; and the fingers which held in their grasp the hand of his son, neither relaxed nor tightened their embrace. The stoic courage of the savage could not have evinced a greater firmness; and if the pressure which removed the veil of darkness from the apple of the eye was followed by a slight pressure of the father's hand, it spoke but the feelings of the heart which said, "Rejoice with me!"

Hitherto the patient had sat as silent and fixed as a statue, but the instant that the surgeon said all was finished, every feature beamed with animation. The stream of light had been felt; the face was lit up; and while, with one hand, Sir John shrouded the brightness of the falling rays, he motioned with the other that Melton should retire a few paces; and, following him with his eyes, he exclaimed, "I see you, my son Melton! once more, my son, I see you!" and, rushing to

his arms, he gazed upon his beloved features, and wept with joy upon his shoulder.

The determined courage of a surgeon may be likened to that which induces the parent to chastise his erring, but beloved child ; to suppose they have not the feelings of men, is calumny. Mr. ——, when his sterner duty was over, not only recalled with admiration the unflinching resolution of Sir John ; but, as a father himself, was touched at the sudden transition from icy endurance, to tenderness which overflowed. He, however, soon interfered ; and, having explained the necessity of darkening the room and binding up the wound, he persuaded Sir John to retire to his bed and exercise the fortitude he had already evinced, by submitting with patience to the result of the operation.

We will not dwell upon these anxious days and nights, nor tell at length how the busy mind teemed with a thousand schemes which grew with the growth of hope. Alas ! too soon they perished with the hope that withered. Sir John de Mowbray had beheld his son

again, but it was the expiring effort of the failing nerves which revived for an instant when the film was removed ; they answered to the rays of heaven, as the dying to the voice of one beloved for years : all that remained of energy was concentrated in that moment of excitement, and they rallied no more.

Day by day, as the bandage was removed, the unhappy baronet prayed for light, more light ; and, as he vainly strained to pierce the dimness of perception, and once more read the features of his son, he exclaimed with a sigh, “ Shall we never more have a sunny day ? ”

Though deceived by the change which immediately followed the couching, that blessed sight returned no more ; and, as the truth flashed upon Sir John, he insisted upon hearing the worst from his surgeon, and learned that he was irrevocably blind !

“ Thank you, my friend,” said Sir John, calmly, as he heard this fiat, and took the surgeon by the hand ; “ I thank you for this, and wish you had dared to speak the truth

at once. You have restored me to myself; my hopes and fears have wavered, flickered like a torch which struggles with the wind—they have unmanned me: but now—now that I know they were but the efforts of an expiring taper—that the doom of darkness is come upon me, I can bow to the decree and be resigned.”

From that hour, Sir John de Mowbray spoke no more of the things of this world; he uttered no complaint, no regret, no wish; if his appetite failed, if he suffered in body, there was no apparent disease, nothing to which the cunning of the leech could minister. Daily his flesh wasted from his bones; but the food which, offered by the hand of his son, and urged by his entreaty, he could not but taste, or attempt to do so—little as it was, was enough to sustain the principle of life. We have said that Sir John was yet a powerful man, and the struggle between life and death was long and awful.

By day, Melton devoted every moment he could spare from business to watch by his father’s bed; by night, he never left the room;

he was his nurse, his physician — all in all to him ; and when at his post, there was a faint smile, an expression of happiness, which ever mingled with the calmness of the dying man.

For weeks and weeks this melancholy duty had been continued ; food had been by degrees all but refused, and little remained to do but the sad task of moistening the cracked and stiffened tongue, or changing the position of one whose dissolution appeared at hand.

Mowbray had just been engaged in this latter office, and as he looked upon the broad expanse of chest, and saw the throbbing of the heart beneath the arching fleshless ribs, he could not but recall the image of a wreck he once had seen, which, stranded and stripped of its planks, lay like a skeleton of one doomed to perish in its strength. These recollections, sadly and fancifully associated with the emaciated form he looked upon, were interrupted by the gentle footsteps of one who whispered in his ear he was wanted below.

“ Impossible ! ” I cannot come at such a moment,” answered Melton de Mowbray in a whisper ; and then, recalling the necessity of

not denying himself, he beckoned to the departing messenger, and added, “Stop! tell me who it is?”

“They are strangers, sir.”

“What! more than one?”

“Two, sir.”

“Did they come together? are they gentlemen?”

“Yes, sir—no, sir—that is, I don’t think they are; but they said they *must* see you.”

“Well, Martha, take my seat for a few minutes: I think my poor father seems inclined to sleep. So saying, Mowbray arose with caution; and, descending to the parlour below, was welcomed by his visitors by a smile and a leer, which passed between themselves.

Martha was not mistaken, for it had been difficult to find two men in excellent case so far removed from the appearance of gentlemen. They were both strong and well-built men by nature; but habit had given a coarse and bloated size to the figure—a heartless bullying expression to the features. Their dress was in accordance: belcher handkerchiefs carelessly tied—shirt collars, grimed and limp with

sweat—the bosoms, spotted with the slobberings of the tankard or rummer, and loosely buttoned, gave a partial view of chests clothed like the shaggy bear; coats greasy, and regardless of shape and make—excepting quantity; pockets gaping—even to that of the fob, from which hung a soiled watch-riband, with one large gold seal uncut, and a little brass key by its side; baggy short; knee-breeches, with top-boots which had slipped and puckered below most muscular calves; will, with a slight addition and variety suggested by the reader's fancy, answer for the costume of both.

Though Melton de Mowbray—in an ignorance which, certainly, had been bliss could it have continued—guessed not the errand of his guests, he could not mistake them for anything better than well-to-do-ruffians in some low, if lawful, office.

“Your name is Melton de Mowbray, is it not, sir?” asked one of the two who happened to take the lead, and still kept on his hat.

“The same, sir. And now, allow me to ask

your name and business," said Mowbray, with the most distant *hauteur* he could command.

"As to *our* names, that's not much to the purpose," answered the second, who had quietly stepped between Mowbray and the door.

"I have not the honour of knowing you, or your friend," said Mowbray, casting a look of contempt upon the man who stood by the door, and addressing himself to him who spoke first.

"My friend, as you calls him, is about right—our names is not much to you; but here's one which, I dare say, you has the 'honour of knowing,' as you say." With this he pulled from his pocket a stripe of parchment, and holding it in one hand, he pointed with the other to the name of "Savage."

"I suppose you knows that gemman?" said the second man, with a "laughing devil" in his eye.

"Savage—Savage," said Mowbray, repeating the name, and not immediately recalling the one amidst the many he had met for the first time in Sir Launcelot Cappulet's chambers.

"Well, Mr. Mowbray," said the man with his hat on, who cared little whether the name was remembered or not, "we know our man, and that's enough for us. As to our business,—you are our prisoner."

"Prisoner!" exclaimed Mowbray, retreating a step as the name and threats of his angry creditor recurred to mind.

"Neither more nor less," said the foremost of the two, who dishonoured the title of "officer:" "you and Sir John de Mowbray, baronet, are arrested at the suit of John Savage; and, if Sir John be't dead, we have orders to arrest you both."

"My father, too!" exclaimed Mowbray, overcome for a moment, and scarcely believing the evidence of his ears. "My father! my helpless, broken-hearted father!—why, I tell you, man, my father is dying!"

"Can't help that, sir; that's not our business."

"You heartless, bloody-minded villains! I defy your power, and warn you hence ere you provoke my vengeance."

As Mowbray uttered this threat, his eyes

flashed like the lion's when roused by anger; and he sprang towards the bell, with the intention of summoning assistance, and of seizing on an old rusty sword which Bowman had brought to add to the *spolia opima* of his collection, and left in the room with the intention of displaying its peculiarities.

The officers, however, were well trained, and old hands at their calling; they saw they had a novice to deal with, and were prepared. In an instant they seized Mowbray by the arms, and were about to preach the doctrine of non-resistance, when, with a sudden and powerful jerk, their prisoner escaped from their grasp, and, possessing himself of the sword, drew it from the scabbard. His opponents were not idle: the one seized upon a poker, with an instinct that proved that the fire-place had been his armoury before now; the other produced from his side-pocket a brass-mounted pistol, a weapon which, in those days, was essential as defence to men whose duties often obliged them to drive a gig on the solitary highways. All this was the work of a few moments; and the change from the death-like stillness of the

room, to the signs which threatened a struggle or bloodshed, was effected in less time than the reader would take to peruse the last few lines.

“Silence!” cried Mowbray, in a deep but under-toned voice; for, once in possession of the sword, he was instantly self-possessed, and spoke and felt with the calmness of courage and despair. “Men,” he continued in the same tone, “if, heartless and brutal as you seem, you deserve the name, by all that is sacred in heaven or earth if you dare to break upon the slumbers of my dying father you yourselves shall die.”

The men were awed by the calm determination with which these words were uttered. There was a pause—they looked to each other as if to hold a council of war. Mowbray saw their indecision; and, reflecting that the most certain means of securing the repose of his father was by submitting himself to the hands of the law, he was the first to break the silence which he had obtained.

“You, sir,”—he said, pointing to the man who had seized the poker—“return that

weapon to its place ; do you"—addressing the other—" return to your pocket the pistol which I see is unloaded, and, on the honour of a gentleman, I will offer no resistance if you will be content with me alone as your prisoner. I tell you distinctly, that were the King, Chancellor, and Council, to command the presence of Sir John de Mowbray, he could not be moved without peril to his life. Are you satisfied?"

At this moment, and before any answer could be given, there was a slight rap at the door ; and, upon receiving Mowbray's reply of " come in," the tall soldier-like figure of Bowman presented itself. He had had occasion to inquire for the now active partner of the house, and, from the description of the visitors, feared that his dear young master might be exposed to some insult of coarseness and vulgarity : but his surprise may be more easily conceived than told, when, upon opening the door, he saw Mowbray with the sword of virtue in his hand, while its rusty scabbard lay upon the floor, opposed, as it seemed, to one man

armed with a pistol—another with a poker. In an instant his experienced eye read the profession of the intruders: his sallow face blushed—positively blushed for once—with indignant anger; he fixed his looks on Mowbray, and, like a faithful dog which only waits his master's word or sign, stood prepared to spring upon the enemy.

“ Halt there! Bowman,” said Mowbray with a faint smile, as he used the favourite exclamation of his true and brave ally, judging rightly that his own words, thus expressed, would be the quickest mode of convincing him that his succour was unneeded. At the same time we must allow, that the fleeting smile came like a ray of brighter days ; it was a coruscation springing from a sense of the ridiculous, which formed part of Mowbray's quick and observant powers, and which, in such characters, will sometimes irresistibly strike the mind in the midst of deep and solemn wo. Bowman's attitude and passionate disdain—the doubtful and disconcerted valour of the officers—his own equipment of a long straight sword, with a cross

and basket hilt, large enough to protect a giant's grasp—formed a group so singular and novel, that, for an instant, the smile was made without an effort ; but it passed like the flash of thought which gave it birth ; and, having succeeded in arresting Bowman's interference, he fixed his looks upon the officers, and repeated—“ Are you satisfied ?”

.. “ That, indeed, alters the case,” replied the one, who seemed glad to resign the offensive.

“ We never wishes for violence — there's no getting nothing out of a dead man,” said the other, with a sheepish look, as he slipped away the pistol, uncocked and with its pan open.

“ Is it that scoundrel ‘ Savage,’ who has done this ?” asked Bowman, who, at least as far as words went, could no longer curb his indignation.

“ Hush ! hush !” said Mowbray calmly, “ my father sleeps ; God grant that he wake not till I return ! Go, Bowman, take my seat, watch by his bed ; and, should he awake, soothe him, cheer him, till I relieve your charge. And

now, gentlemen," he added—changing at once from the tone of deepest feeling to that of cold and cutting irony—" now, gentlemen, I resign my sword, and am your prisoner."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:

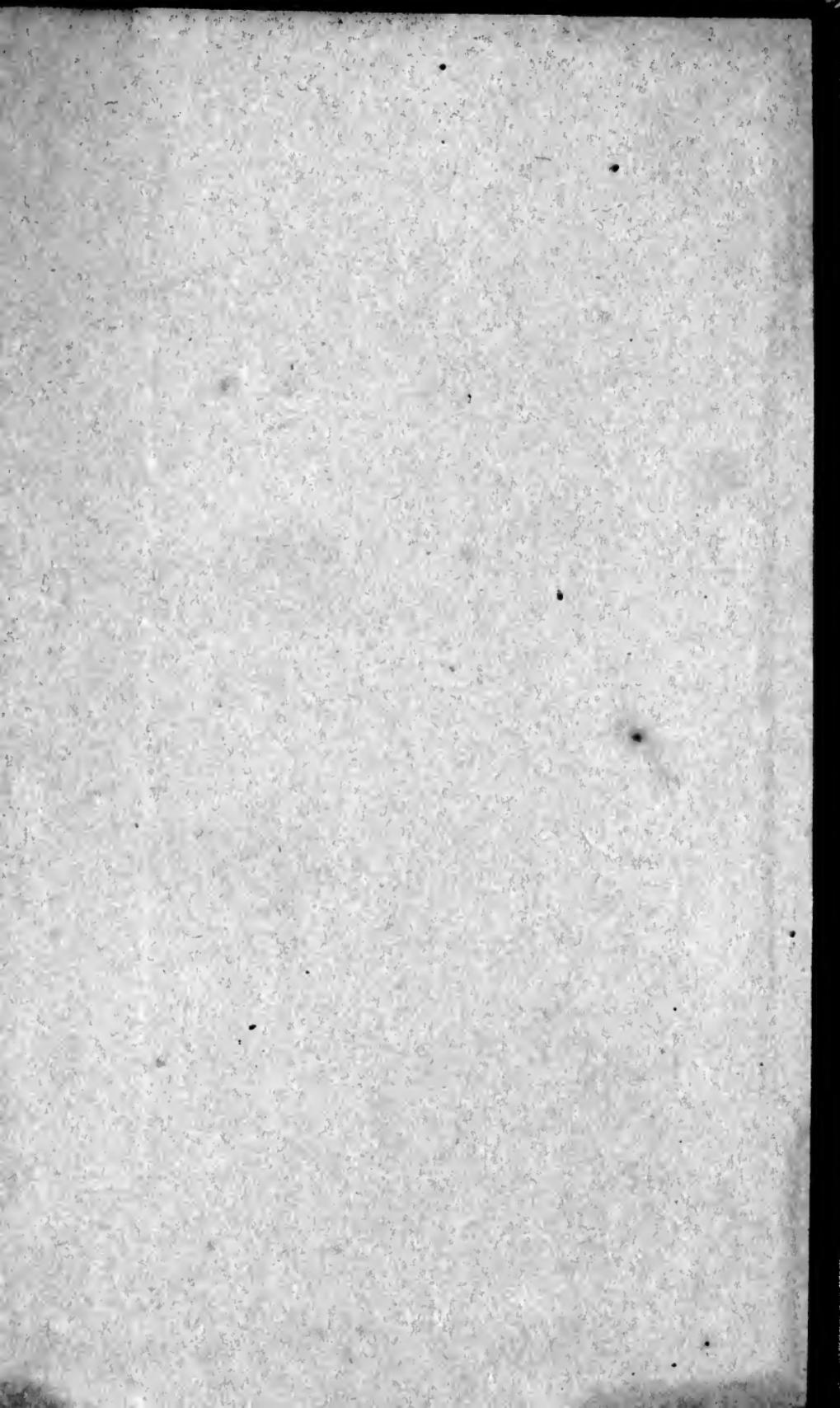
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